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OBSERVATIONS

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THAT REMINDS ME—
WHAT NEXT
CHRISTOPHER CARROLL, ETC.



WINIFRED GRAHAM
(Mrs. Theodore Cory). The Author

OBSERVATIONS CASUAL and INTIMATE

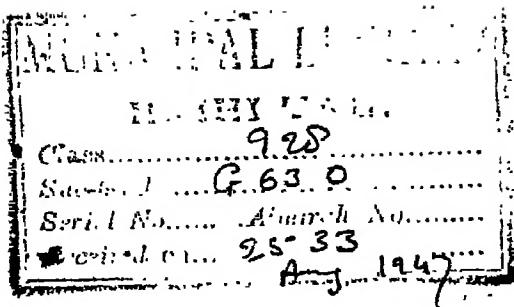
*Being the Second Volume of
THAT REMINDS ME—*

by

WINIFRED GRAHAM

(With many Illustrations)

SKEFFINGTON AND SON LTD
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I dedicate this book with gratitude to all the friends and strangers who have sent me such kind expressions of appreciation of my Autobiography:

THAT REMINDS ME—

Hoping these “Observations” may also meet with their approval.

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CHAPTER I

THE STOREHOUSE

We have just entered upon the New Year of 1946 and with it comes the urge to make resolves. I have resolved to attempt another book of Memoirs, encouraged by the wonderful reception a kind Press and public gave to my autobiography—*That Reminds Me*. It was a packet of Memoirs snatched from the years which have flown, published just before our first peace-time Christmas and I begin to feel I must be very old to have so many memories.

Now what is memory? The question rushed to my mind as I wrote those words and I turned to my largest dictionary, for I have a collection of all sizes. This mammoth book called *The King's English Dictionary* describes memory as "the knowledge of previous thoughts and events . . . remembrance of a person or event preserved to after-times; exemption from oblivion; monumental record; reminiscence."

I am surprised to find myself once again donning the garb of a "memorist," the word that same important dictionary uses for a writer of Memoirs.

So in these early days of January, when I see strong hands digging in the garden, I am about to dig further into my past and open a Storehouse of varying compartments. Naturally there is a lumber room cluttered with visions frail as a spider's web or a wisp of hoar frost on a wintry hedge. There are vaults, sealed with passionate security—they guard the sacred treasures of the heart. No spying eyes peep through those keyholes! But first let us look at the outer walls. The South aspect is painted with sunshine of youthful days where every shadow has a silver lining. Youth, so recuperative and eager to enjoy, throws golden beams on that dazzling façade. On the bleak Northern aspect life's sorrows are stamped. North, South, East or West, the Storehouse holds the mystery of the past. I would ask all who are reading these lines (before they go a step further with me) to pause and delve if only for a few moments into their magic past. Conjure up its sweets, for pleasant hours are always the easiest to remember. Don't you agree, Reader, that far-off days through which we have lived are so like a dream it is sometimes hard to realize it all happened?

Let us pump oxygen into the stagnant atmosphere of these Storehouses, open the windows and resurrect precious gems of Memory which not even the thief of Time can steal. Lean out of the casement refreshed, capture old thrills which add to the rhythm of living.

It is lovely to recall cheerful days, but one of my New Year calendars written by the Rev. W. H. Elliott says otherwise. This popular cleric, Precentor of the Chapel Royal, who resides at St. James's Palace, tells us: "Too much sun makes a Sahara. Therefore never put happiness first."

In this same calendar he declares the trouble with our world is that it's so full of critics who seem to be out to find and expose our weak points.

"Remember," he writes, "that critics are often people who can't do the thing themselves. Often that is true of those who criticise books or plays."

My husband, Theodore, said to me when he read this: "I wish you would copy that out and send it to James Agate, the literary critic."

I replied I would not dream of doing such a thing! His cryptic style gives him a certain "corner in bitterness." I believe many of his victims rather enjoy his sly sarcastic digs, that is to say if they have a sense of humour. When reviewing my autobiography *That Reminds Me—*, he alluded to my being amused to see the crowds which gathered round the Lord Mayor's carriage, when as the guest of the Lord Mayor I was leaving a theatre at which we had enjoyed a performance by Sarah Bernhardt. He ignored the fact that I am not a literary critic, nor was I speaking of the play. With delightful cynicism he called my allusion to the famous coachman and his equipage "a piercing analysis of the art of Sarah Bernhardt" and recommended it to all students of the drama. Thus he loves to poke fun—good luck to him—I enjoyed it.

Anyway he opened that review with a warning I am taking to heart as I commence my book. James Agate's advice is: "Will people never learn that it is a fatal thing to say: 'Meet so-and-so, you'll like him enormously'? The proper thing to say, if you wish the acquaintance to prosper, is 'Meet so-and-so, I should think you'll hate him.'"

Having digested these trenchant and illuminating words from the pen of an English critic, I am not going to tell you that my Memoirs will introduce charming people. I leave you, Reader, to judge this for yourself.

When these words are printed Christmas 1945 will have been left far behind. Many of us may have forgotten the wonderful thrill of being at peace after all the furious years of fighting and bombing, when those words: "Peace on earth and goodwill towards men" fell strangely on the ear. My husband's godson, Col. Neil Preston, wrote describing how he and an R.A.F. officer spent Christmas Eve in Bethlehem. He says:

We sang carols and attended a service in the Courtyard outside the Church of the Nativity. What a sensational scene it was! The crowds must have included about 90,000 people, mostly Protestants, Catholics, Jews, Greek members of the Coptic and Abyssinian faith, with a host of others too numerous to mention.

It is not easy to picture that vast congregation. How different that immense gathering of worshippers from the numbers attending worship in our country. Though I must say Hampton Parish Church gave us quite a surprise at the Midnight Communion which we attended. It was packed and the brilliant lights were a striking contrast to previous years, when we groped our way in and sang hymns to the dim glow of our hand torches.

Never have such a quantity of seasonable greetings been sent and received as on this memorable Christmas. We were snowed under with the sweet pictures and verses which every post showered into our letter box. Now looking back on them in the New Year the one that charms me most has no decoration. It is a plain white card with words so clearly printed they hit the eye like landmarks.

Beautifully formed letters appeal to me as much as a perfect drawing which soothes and satisfies the senses. This greeting came from a well-known publisher and a valued friend. The words seemed symbolic of his life and ever-increasing success:

Life is a straight plain business, and the way is clear, blazed for you by generations of strong men, into whose labours you enter and whose ideals must be your inspiration.

I wish you good health and happiness in 1946.

WALTER HUTCHINSON.

In my recent autobiography I was privileged to give a detailed account of his amazingly active, busy and influential life. It astounded my readers who had no idea one man could incorporate in a single existence such a multitude of affairs. I agree with Sydney Carroll who wrote, when mentioning this book in his *Daily Sketch* review:

“There is a special chapter on Walter Hutchinson and his achievements which should arouse the envy of all his competitors in the publishing field.”

Christmas is a time when people tell ghost stories, in fact ghosts may be called a seasonable subject. I have just been reading in the *Daily Express* some words written by Maurice Barbanell, Editor of *Psychic News*. He tells us that ghosts have been explained away “scientifically” by Chapman Pincher, whose theory is endorsed by Harry Price. This bold statement assures us that thousands of people all over the world who have seen ghosts have not seen them. It was all due to their mechanism of vision being reversed! Maurice Barbanell goes on to say he will quote only one example to prove how completely wrong Pincher is. Letter and verse are then given by Barbanell of a psychic photograph taken at Raynham Hall, Norfolk, when the Dowager Lady

Townshend was in residence there. I would like to add an authentic story on the same lines when more than one ghost appeared on a negative which was never re-touched, a negative which no experts could explain away. This story is vouched for by Lord Palmer's wife. On a visit to the Basilica at Domremy dedicated to St. Joan of Arc, Lady Palmer noticed that the Chapel had no Union Jack in it, whereas the Americans had their flag. Feeling it was but England's duty to be represented, she gave and collected sums large enough to send a silk Union Jack *With England's Homage* round the staff, the flag bearing the signatures of Field-Marshal Haig and of Marshal Foch and Prebendary Carlile. It was taken and placed by Prebendary Carlile on 9th June, 1925.

In October of the same year Lady Palmer went to see it. Miss Townsend, who accompanied her, took a photograph. They were alone in the Chapel. When the photograph of the flag was developed, lo and behold—to their astonishment, two priests were seen garbed in robes of Joan period—not existing now.

The King's photographer said it could not possibly have been faked when he examined the film.

Now I wonder how Chapman Pincher—the ghost debunker—would answer that.

Parties for the very young are an inevitable part of Christmas. I notice a change in technique has come in with modern times. When I was young our elders strained every nerve to keep the ball rolling organising games into which they entered with self-sacrificing energy. Now the new order seems that after a sumptuous tea the little visitors amuse themselves. The grown-ups leave them to their own devices with boisterous and happy results. At a recent gathering of young folk a humorous grandmother, who having reared a large family is always surrounded with the olive branches of a second generation, said with a wry smile: "I call children's parties—hell on earth."

Perhaps she did not like noise, for certainly the children at a recent party I was bidden to made excellent use of their lungs.

The kind hostess who included us both among the older folk invited was Mrs. Desmond MacCarthy, wife of the well-known literary critic. They live quite near us in a spacious flat overlooking the river at Garrick's Villa.

It was strange to see Desmond's large library, which is stacked with books from floor to ceiling, occupied by tiny figures feasting at tables on which soft candle-light flickered to give an old world atmosphere to the scene.

As Mrs. MacCarthy's husband was delayed in London and did not arrive until later, Theodore, being the only man present, helped to conduct the cheerful carols before tea and afterwards became miraculously one of the children when they commenced to amuse themselves. The flat is large and beautifully arranged, room leading from room in

circular formation. A game of wolf started. Theodore, with a fur coat over his head, emitting gruesome sounds, chased the whole shrieking company of excited children round and round those lofty precincts where once the famous David Garrick entertained so royally. Having started the fun, he joined us older ones round a huge log fire and each child became "wolf" in turn. Yells of delight continued until presents were distributed and good-byes said. I could not help thinking how much happier this riotous gaiety made the guests than when children were trained never to be noisy in company.

Our Vicar at Hampton, the Rev. Charles Knapp (whose children were at that party), told an amusing story in the pulpit. Two small people were discussing the news that their very generous granny was ill. As a matter of fact she only had a cold, but their fears ran high because the festive season was approaching. One child was heard to say to her sister: "Wouldn't it be awful if anything happened to granny before Christmas?" "It won't," replied the other. "She won't die." Not reassured by this definite statement the younger one said fearfully: "How do you know?" "Because," replied the optimist, "God couldn't be so mean!"

Mr. Knapp has always a store of stories and another he told at a Parish Social was distinctly up to date. A teacher having explained the details of the first Christmas to her class, asked them to draw the incidents to see how much they remembered. They duly produced their childish efforts, including the manger and the star, etc. One small boy drew the shepherds and their celestial visitants, but appeared to have forgotten the principal mark of an angel. "You haven't given your angels any wings," the teacher said, pointing to the omission. "They don't need wings," he replied. "My angels are jet propelled."

A friend of mine who is very anxious her children should have good manners, told me they asked rather plaintively: "Mummy, *why* must we behave?"

I don't know what she answered, but I know many of Mrs. MacCarthy's young guests remembered to thank her when leaving her lovely party, laden with presents.

She has the knack of selecting gifts that exactly suit the favoured recipient. This last Christmas she sent me a charming little framed picture of "St. Alban." She always says she loves our riverside house "St. Albans" and so kindly found us our patron Saint. "St. Alban" is described on the picture as: "1st. Martyr of England—A.D. 303. June 22."

With the long river frontage our home certainly has a mystic atmosphere, but since I have so fully described the garden and house in *That Reminds Me—*, I must not repeat myself, though I can tell a strange story in connection with the magnolia tree which to our great grief has recently died. One may mourn for a tree almost like a lost friend. We miss its smiling face and the quantity of exquisite white blooms like water lilies which in summer used to drench the air with

perfume. "St. Albans," which Theodore bought after my father died, was my parents' old home. They took it in their early married days and on the first night of their occupation, lured by the moonlight which made everything as clear as day, Mother told me they went out on the river. When returning to the lawn my father suddenly said:

"Do you see anything peculiar in that magnolia tree?"

"Why, yes," she replied, "a man is hanging there!"

Hurriedly they disembarked and rushed towards the tree, seeing the hanging figure all the time quite distinctly. Then as they reached the bough it disappeared. They told each other their imagination must have played them a trick but they were naturally much puzzled. A week later they were invited to a ball at Colonel Harfield's large house at Sunbury-on-Thames. There my father was introduced to a Molesey resident who said directly she heard his name:

"Are you the Mr. Graham who has bought 'St. Albans,' that lovely old house where the man hanged himself on the magnolia tree?"

Startled and very interested, he begged her to tell him the details.

"I don't really know much about it," she declared, "except that I heard it was a footman who got into trouble over money and people say his ghost haunts the garden."

My parents never saw him again. It was another of those things which cannot be explained, but at least they knew the apparition was not merely imagination.

The next ghost which appeared at "St. Albans" was seen indoors by a maid who rushed to my mother's room in a state of great excitement to say she had met a most beautiful lady on the stairs in a low necked dress, surrounded by a bright light which showed up her jewels and the sweet expression in her eyes. Asked if the strange lady didn't frighten her, the girl replied: "No, she was so beautiful, I was sorry when she vanished."

After hearing more details of the stranger's dress and appearance, Mother thought the description sounded like Nell Gwynn who built this house for her son. Shut away in a box among some old photographs of the Hampton Court beauties, Mother knew she had a full-length picture of Nell Gwynn. She got it out and laid it on the table in the servants' hall. The moment the maid saw it she exclaimed: "Why, this is my lovely lady, it is her exactly!"

I am afraid we all felt rather jealous and annoyed that pretty Nell never appeared again or troubled to show herself to the owners of her son's old home. My mother often wondered why that maid was so favoured.

It is difficult to say which I love most, this house or its garden, both have much enchantment. We have planted another tree where the gracious magnolia stood and placed a stone bird bath to mark the spot where once a large pink May tree blossomed. My mother was quite

heart-broken when that special favourite of hers died of old age and its withered trunk was hacked down. A friend said: "You see, it thought it was too old to wear pink!" A peculiarity about this special tree was the enormous mistletoe bough which grew on one of its lower branches. There is a superstition that when mistletoe touches the earth, misfortune comes to the world. That bough on which this large clump of mistletoe flourished seemed weighed down by its unusual burden and in 1914, just before war broke out, the mistletoe brushed the soft grass of the lawn.

I often think we take trees too much for granted and are not grateful enough to those responsible for their gracing the earth. It is a specially lovable trait in our dear friend and neighbour Field-Marshal Lord Birdwood, that wherever he lives, and he has resided in many notable residences, he plants one if not several trees. He feels it is a duty he owes to posterity. There is much truth in the lines:

"Give fools their gold and knaves their power;
Let fortune's bubbles rise and fall;
Who sows a field, or trains a flower
Or plants a tree, is more than all."

Let us follow our senior Field-Marshal's good example and plant a tree wherever we can.

He and his charming wife are great lovers of nature. Lady Birdwood shows this in an unpublished account she wrote during their official visit to Australia and New Zealand in 1919. She kindly gave me this private diary printed in booklet form for her family and relations and needless to say I value it very much. She and her celebrated husband, as guests of the Government, were royally entertained from the moment they embarked in the Orient steamer *Ormonde* on a bleak November morning, till they placed foot on English soil again. It is touching to read of the welcome given so enthusiastically to honoured guests on distant shores. The official receptions of course were endless and private entertaining too, always they were moving on and on. The many changes of climate must have been trying, yet it seems every moment was appreciated by these great lovers of life. No wonder Field-Marshal Birdwood is a good speaker, he has had practice enough throughout the Dominions where he was acclaimed by thousands of cheering admirers. The Governor-General of Australia testified to the brilliant success of their visit and its good influence on the cementing of unity between Australia and the Empire. I am sure many hearts were sad at saying farewell when they shook hands with a vast concourse of people gathered on the wharves to see them off. Then when Lord Birdwood had inspected the large Guard of Honour, the *Manuka* glided slowly away to the strains of the band playing—*Auld Lang Syne*, *He's a Jolly Good Fellow* and finally—*God send you back to me*.

The diary takes us from those happy months in Australia to a triumphant tour through New Zealand. Lady Birdwood's account of nature's wonders in that delectable land made me long to see the many thrilling sights so graphically described. The geysers for instance, they sound like a dream. Imagine emerging from your hotel on a bitterly cold morning after a night of hard frost, to plunge in the open air into water heated by natural springs sufficiently to swim for half an hour in perfect comfort. Through her eyes we see the boiling seething water of the "Champagne Cauldron," a lake bubbling, frothing and throwing up vast columns of steam. From turbulent volumes of steam pouring out of the bowels of the earth, we come to where all is stillness and silence after the violent indescribable roar of the famous Waitakei Blow Hole which sends its deafening breath of steam bursting riotously through the funnel-shaped aperture in a rock.

Being an artist Lady Birdwood must have revelled in the gems of colour painted by volcanic clays which turned a chain of dazzling lakes yellow, green and turquoise, the exact blue of the stone. It is enough to make the housewife's mouth water in these days of fuel shortage to read her account of the Maoris cooking their food in boiling pools and basins heated from unknown fires and forces below. In one spot a trout stream of clear cold water ran alongside a boiling pool. The Maoris caught their trout on one side and without having to move—cooked it in the other.

And so the pleasant chronicle goes on to delight her relatives and the few favoured friends who are privileged to own a copy of this "private view" of the Birdwoods' memorable travels in the interests of our Empire.

Writing your Memoirs is rather like writing a book of travels, you journey through the past and the ever-changing picture on the screen of thought is apt at times to become bewildering. So much to remember—so much to forget, which is the easiest I wonder? Often there is salvation in the blessed talent of forgetfulness!

Conscience may say you shall not forget your past errors—your past sins. They are allowed to track you down the years, to peep at you round corners, to haunt your dreams. I always feel sorry for a criminal who is arrested late in life and punished for a deed committed in youth. Probably the delinquent has travelled so far away from his previous self, he feels like another person. Don't we all say to ourselves at times: "Did I ever feel like that?" "Did I ever do that?"

Having written my autobiography I don't want these Memoirs to come under that category. They are not a chronicle of my life as the last book was, the Storehouse will have no chronological order. It only claims to recall a happy past of events and scenes peopled by men and women I have known and have reason to remember.

I was glad when W. Howell-Jones in his kindly review of *That Reminds Me*—in *The Western Mail* said there was not a note of venom

or prejudice throughout. His lovely remark "it glitters with good things" naturally thrilled me. Since it was my first plunge into biographical fiction after a lifetime of novel writing, I feel grateful for the way the Press received that story of my life.

Authors, actors, artists of all kind, to say nothing of statesmen and politicians who are at the mercy of the newspaper critic, can well understand Rudyard Kipling's trenchant lines:

"Remember the battle and stand aside
While thrones and powers confess
That King over all the children of pride
Is the Press—the Press—the Press!"

Well, now the door of my Storehouse is opened I hope I shall feel as Hans Andersen did when he wrote his famous story *The Snow Queen*. He took such delight in it that he said the words simply danced on to the page.

I know that feeling, a writer's joy, when words seem living things. Often they trip across the paper like fairies treading a light-hearted measure. I wish myself this New Year some such sensation while obeying the Green Light to go on—yes—on—on—on with the dance.

CHAPTER II

MUSIC AND SWIMMING

I WANT to talk for a moment about Atmosphere, that mysterious "something" we all have round us. I am peculiarly sensitive to it and feel at once this indefinable influence which emanates from various personalities. One cannot explain why some people lift the spiritual temperature while others quite unconsciously lower it to zero.

Those who bring warmth and charm into a cold room exude magnetism to electrify their friends. Other less fortunate mortals are destined to damp down the cheeriest company, the air becomes stagnant the moment they appear. It is odd that human beings have the power to make or mar the very buildings in which they have lived perhaps centuries ago. The least imaginative must admit that historical places and old houses do retain the peculiar atmospherics of their time.

If only men and women, in ancient or modern homes realised what mind-control can accomplish, their powers would be enormous. To begin with, no scolding voice must ever pass the lips, then like a weaver the

head of that family spins the illusive unseen fascination of atmosphere which heals and invigorates.

I have always felt our home "St. Albans" has helped me to write the numerous novels which seem part of myself, like unborn children to a mother. Then when the pangs of labour are over in which there is pleasure instead of pain and the manuscript goes forth fully grown, I feel the old home bids it godspeed. I ask myself would I have written over eighty books if the dear house where no quarrels ever take place had been less kind? It is romantic to be living in advanced age under the roof that sheltered me in earliest childhood, to walk the paths my baby feet trod and dream in a garden full of the sweet odour of past joys.

An incident in the days of long ago always strikes me as dramatic. It occurred one night at "St. Albans" when our big dog "Help" (such a suitable name) barked loudly. My father flung open his bedroom window just as a burglar was attempting to enter the premises. The man had come by boat and seeing he was discovered, hid his face with his hands and rushed towards the raft. Not waiting even to put on slippers, "Papa" (our name for him then) raced down and as the burglar rowed away he rowed after him. But the intruder having a good start sprang out on the towing path opposite, abandoned his craft and made off across the old Hampton race-course, which in those days was open to the public and not fenced in as Hurst Park is now. It was impossible to continue the chase bare-footed, but at least "Papa" congratulated himself he had the robber's boat which might be a clue to his identity. Towing it back he made inquiries the next day to find that the wily burglar had stolen the police boat to do his thieving, and had visited Garrick's Villa that same night. From there he carried off much loot, including a large gold inkstand, which later identified him as the notorious murderer Peace. What a lovely name for such an evil character! If that gold inkstand had not been amongst his possessions when he was arrested for robbery and murder, we should never have known that a man remembered in many chronicles of crime was our unwelcome visitor. I hope my parents gave the gallant "Help" an extra bone next day for his good night's work.

Because of this incident I have always been interested in the strange career of Peace, that arch humbug who was a Church Warden. We went to see the play in London on his life. I understand it was unlucky and that many people connected with the production fell ill or were the victims of accidents. The executioner, Marwood, who hanged Peace, also hanged Joe Brady and the other men condemned for killing Lord Frederick Cavendish in Phoenix Park, Dublin. The career of a public hangman seems to the ordinary layman full of gruesome mystery. One wonders how these officers of the law feel as they start off to carry out their strange task. Some interesting paragraphs appeared early this year in *The Evening News* on the subject of executioners. It seems the

business of hanging one's fellows is a much desired and eagerly sought after post. *The Evening News* reporter paid a visit to the Records Department of the Corporation of the City of London and saw 800 letters from people who wanted to succeed the late Marwood—this was in 1883. The applicants were a mixed lot, including a shoemaker, a policeman, a retiring petty officer of the Royal Navy, a quarryman and a host of labourers. Also a number of butchers were in the running, and the strange part was the stress laid by almost every candidate upon his religious devoutness. The writer gave extracts from several letters, the quaintest being: "I am by profession a scaffolder. Should you honour me with the appointment, I will do my best to please all parties."

Well, they all seemed a happy lot. One sent a rope with his letter and another declared he had much experience in testing and tying ropes in boat-building, while a particularly keen applicant stated: "If given a trial, I will for the first twelve months do the work for a smaller sum than the late Mr. Marwood."

I think these gentlemen must have had something in common with an old negro, who on being asked why he was always so contented and pleased to do any work which came to hand however disagreeable, replied that he had learnt to co-operate with the inevitable.

That view of life is worth thinking over!

But to turn to a pleasanter subject than hanging condemned criminals by the neck until they be dead, I had a pleasant surprise when I received a letter from the famous Haydn Wood, since I have not the pleasure of his acquaintance. I get a large correspondence from strangers whose names mean nothing to me, and when a charmingly worded epistle comes from a world-wide celebrity it is a thrilling change. I say world-wide because he occupies a place in music to-day which is probably unique. I was flattered to learn he was in the middle of reading my novel, *A Spider Never Falls*, and was intrigued by a line from a song:

"I shall be there whatever path you tread."

He had written a ballad containing these words and as at the time it was fairly new he wondered if it were an actual quotation when I wrote my book. He enclosed a catalogue of music in which he marked the song in question. I am afraid I had to confess I had quoted the words, without knowing the distinguished composer, from hearing his song on the radio. They just fitted in with the sentiments of the scene I was drawing in that story. Somehow it seemed right for a man who must have a very poetic soul to be living in lovely Devon. I had a further letter from him in reply to mine, kindly congratulating me on my output and saying: "I am sure it is much easier to write music, for I started doing so, very crudely of course, at the age of about thirteen, but I did not meet with any success till I was about twenty."

The violin to which he was devoted proved his principal study and means of livelihood in those days. I cannot agree with him that creating music is a simpler task than penning prose and expect he just said that by way of a compliment. In an account of Haydn Wood the interviewer says his compositions are so varied that a well-known critic described him as being a musical "Jekyll and Hyde," a composer who writes in one mood serious works on a large scale, and in another, ballads which have a world appeal.

It always interests me to know how inspiration comes to musicians, writers, or any who follow the Arts, so I was thrilled to learn Haydn Wood has experienced one or two instances of ideas coming unexpectedly at strange times. He believes inspiration should not be waited for, but sought diligently and so these special instances are the more fascinating. His delightful refrain of *Love's Garden of Roses*, known throughout the world, was born on a bus, yes—on the top of a bus in the Finchley Road, prosaic enough surroundings and one would think the last place to inspire a romantic masterpiece! It was one evening during the 1914 war that he grasped from out the blue this haunting melody which floated through his brain at the psychological moment. What it must mean to receive a gift like that from the gods is incomprehensible to the average man or woman. On that remunerative evening which enriched the music of this generation, Haydn Wood jumped off the bus and jotted down that heavenly tune under the faint light of a street lamp, on an envelope. I hope he has kept that envelope; it ought to be framed. We are also told in this same interview that *Bird of Love Divine* was hatched in an armchair one winter's evening while gazing into a glowing fire. I think perhaps of all his lyrics *Roses of Picardy* takes the palm; that melody will live for ever.

I have Mr. Haydn Wood's promise that some day when he returns to London he and his wife will come and see us at "St. Albans," perhaps this may happen before the green light changes to red and I stop my chronicle of past and passing events. Anyway, I hope "I shall Be There"—whatever path I tread. I can visualise him because he kindly sent me his picture, and his chronicler describes him as utterly free from all affectation and almost unbelievably modest and self-effacing, but when you get to know him, one of the most charming, likeable and companionable of men.

The article which gives an all too short outline of his life's history is printed: "With acknowledgments to H. S. March, 1944." It concludes with a eulogistic tribute paid to him by Mr. W. H. Glendining. I will quote the poetic last paragraph:

"*The Roses of Picardy* will be fragrantly blooming, the *Bird of Love* will still sing, and there will always be a *Garden of Roses* and *A Brown Bird Singing* while a piano or gramophone or voice remains in this land."

Birds of every kind are the happy inhabitants of our "St. Albans" garden. It is a sanctuary for songsters although we have two cats, our elegant Siamese "Tamara" and bold beautiful "Mr. Bumps." He is thoroughly English, a handsome black and white tom and a fine sportsman where rats or mice are concerned. Occasionally he is wicked enough to stray into Bushey Park and bring home a baby rabbit. An odd thing happened once in one of our old elm trees by the river. Regularly every year a wild duck built her home there. On one occasion the nest being low down, a cat of ours was found seated on the eggs keeping them warm while the feathered owner took some recreation. The strange part was, that Mother Duck did not desert the eggs and in due course we chaperoned a fine brood of ducklings safely into the river Thames. We are annually honoured by Kingfisher guests, lovely beyond words when their wings catch the sunlight, while a long-legged heron fishes from our raft. In the winter the demand of many hungry beaks becomes quite embarrassing, swans and seagulls being a greater tax than the smaller fry. It seems one can never have enough to fully satisfy such a huge family. We should miss them if they chose to beg elsewhere, such elegant suppliants are always welcome. That is one of the joys of facing England's finest river. There is always life on it, whether in the form of various wild fowl, the King's stately swans, picturesque barges and river craft. Sailing boats now have adopted a fashion of brilliant blue or scarlet sails to ornament our Silent Highway. Brilliant hues never look garish or in bad taste when reflected in the silver stream which glorifies everything. At any time of the year there is charm in old Father Thames. I love to gaze on beating storms, floating ice or glowing sunsets, for winter and summer hold equal charm for me.

There are people who imagine it is damp and unhealthy to live alongside a river; I pity them, they miss so much. In my husband's Cambridge days he loved Clare College as it was on the river, so we share this watery taste! One of his friends was asked to write an epigram on the Oxford and Cambridge rivers and produced a very brilliant result which Theodore has always remembered. It ran as follows:

"I feign would write an epigram
Upon the Isis and the Cam—
But tell me Father Thames' daughter
How can I write upon the water?"

I should like to have followed the career of the undergraduate who wrote that verse but Theodore does not even remember his name.

What an excellent thing it is that in every class of society, children are taught to swim in these days. It is pathetic to remember how the art of swimming was neglected in my childhood. Many sad boating tragedies occurred which might have been avoided if swimming had been the

fashion. I don't think any of the village children dreamt of bathing in the Thames and there were no open air baths where the young could enjoy this healthy exercise. My sister Evelyn and I were taught in earliest youth by my father giving us lessons from a punt, with a rope round our waist at the end of a pole. Often we were asked: "Are people allowed to swim in the river?" This question was generally put in a rather shocked voice. We assured the somewhat scandalised inquirers that of course it was permitted if you wore a costume! I often think of this when I see the crowds of bathers in the summer and watch the bold way boys and men swim over from the opposite bank to rest and lie in the sun on our private landing stage without a "by your leave." The people I really admire are those all the year round swimmers and there is one I will specially mention because we have only lately discovered his identity. For some years now—between seven and eight in the morning all through the cold winter, even when ice is floating in blocks down the Thames, a man comes pacing up the towing path opposite this house. He has a key to the bathing shed and in frost, snow or biting winds takes his daily plunge, then walks back briskly towards East Molesey. One morning he was preceded by a *Daily Sketch* car from which a photographer emerged to snap the intrepid bather enjoying his wintry swim. We take in the *Daily Sketch*; it is a particular favourite of ours and the following day when the picture appeared we learnt the man whose courage we had long admired, was Mr. George Isaacs, Minister of Labour in the present Socialist Government. Some years ago he was always accompanied by a small black dog which barked with delight as his master took the plunge. Since that canine companion disappeared no successor has taken its place, but the bathers in the summer who know Mr. Isaacs by sight, say he throws sticks in the water for their dogs and is evidently an animal lover.

It is not only the male species who can endure drastic dips in the depth of winter. One of my Red Cross Commandants (I am Divisional Vice-President for the Twickenham, Teddington and the Hamptons Division) bicycles to the Thames all the year round for her early morning swim. She has a grown-up son and she told me she continued her winter bathing until a month before he arrived in this world. Her doctor remarked it was surprising the baby was not born with webbed feet!

I am writing on one of the coldest days in January during a spell of hard frost and I have just read in a Sunday paper that a middle-aged man, living in a Weymouth hotel, crossed six inches of snow on the front to have his weekly bathe in the sea. I feel that whatever this middle-aged man's politics may be, he and Mr. Isaacs and my Commandant ought to meet!

I, who revel still in summer bathing, envy the strong folk whose circulation allows them to continue through the icy months of our erratic climate. Twice in my younger days I bathed with the snow on

the ground and had no wish to continue the experiment. Theodore is also a keen swimmer.

Now it happens we are both so completely in tune with each other that we never quarrel and on looking back I only remember one occasion when he was really cross with me. We were bathing in the Isle of Wight at Totland Bay, on our honeymoon. It was a rough morning, but bright and sunny. Revelling in the high tide he swam far out till gradually the waves completely hid him from view. Less daring, I remained nearer the shore. Suddenly my heart began to flutter with fear for the beloved, then an anxious bride used her lungs for all she was worth and called loudly and persistently:

"Theodore—come back!"

Imagine the newly wed husband's confusion when suddenly the whole beach and all the bathers took up the cry in a riot of mirth, till the air rang with: "*Theodore—come back!*"

A shy young man swam to the shore and made a dash for his bathing hut. I was severely reprimanded, and for the rest of our long married life I have never again attempted to curtail his swim.

Theodore was always a favourite name of mine and I am glad it has never in his case been abbreviated to "Theo." He came by it because his "Nanny" in early infancy had nursed King Theodore of Abyssinia's children. When in 1868 England was compelled to wage war against this reckless monarch, who had imprisoned some English subjects, 12,000 troops, mostly Indian, invaded Theodore's inland stronghold of Magdala and compelled the release of the captives. The King slew himself in a fit of despair and his children were brought to England to be reared and educated. To commemorate this British victory, Theodore's mother named her fifteenth child after the dethroned monarch, then deceased, the presence of the nurse giving her the idea. It must have been difficult for Mrs. Cory to find names for such a large family, sixteen in all. We have not followed her example, but I call my books my "brain-children," so on that score I have beaten this prolific lady in numbers, having brought to birth over eighty novels.

Talking of names, I don't know why my parents alighted on Winifred for me, but it seems to link up with my love of water. Winifred means "White Stream" and there is a "Saint Winifred's Well."

Names are always a headache, when thinking out an original title for a book, a play, a boat or a horse. But I often wonder who is responsible for naming places. If you happen to have a stock of maps it is quite entertaining to open them at random and pick out unusual names. Some years ago I read an article on this subject by Stanley Baron, I forget the paper and the date, but the writer gave some amazing names which have lived in my memory. Now what do you think of the following? He began by asking us to take the road to "Plain Dealings," "Red Roses," "Stepaside" or "Stammers," all places in Pembrokeshire.

From there he led us to "Barleybeans," "The Hole," "Nasty" and "Great Cousins" in Hertfordshire. He called these "good names of East Anglican flavour," but I should not like my writing paper headed by "Nasty" or "The Hole." I should prefer—"Larks in the Wood" or "Foxearth"—to be found in Suffolk. This man who wrote of names said he was quite tired of seeing "Good Easter" on signposts. Others he gave were "God's Blessing Green," "Water-break-its-Neck," "High Heaven's Wood," "Hell Corner" and "Staylittle." The last two hailed from Wales. Among the most beautiful names he cited were "Bliss Gate" and the famous "St. Anthony in Roseland." The latter comes from Cornwall, where Theodore's mother was born in a romantic house called "Roseworthy." She was a Cornish "Vivian," but the house and garden where her childish feet trod have long since been pulled down and the grounds built over.

It is strange in advanced age when life's page is softly folding, how often the mind wanders to early days and the beginning of the pilgrimage. Just before she passed away as naturally as the ripe fruit falls from the tree, she said to her devoted daughters: "I want to go back to Roseworthy." I have an eye for names and I feel that particular one holds music.

I often wonder how authors alight on titles for their books. It is a joke in our family that the title seems to worry me more than actually writing a novel. But my curiosity goes further than this, I should love to know the method pursued by my favourite authors when genius burns. The famous writer Le Fanu, known as a Master of the Macabre, author of such well-remembered thrillers as *Uncle Silas*, *In a Glass Darkly* and a number of other famous books in the eighties, wrote under strange conditions. No desk or study for his grim productions, he weaved them from his vivid imagination in a big four-poster in the dead of night. One of his chroniclers, Montague Summers, describes the scene in that heavily draped bed. Le Fanu would create his ghostly subjects—vampires, witchcraft, diabolic possession, etc., by the light of two tall candles on a table by his side, left burning whether he slumbered or remained wide awake to write furiously in pencil, using ruled copybooks for his sinister manuscripts. During the night and the early hours of the morning he would brew himself strong tea, drinking cup after cup, raised on high pillows, often in a state of nervous tension because of the horrible characters which thronged his brain. He believed, so Mr. Summers tells us, that everyone who sets about writing in earnest works *on* something, tea or coffee, tobacco or alcohol. Le Fanu, except for his copious tea-drinking, was very abstemious and was a non-smoker. In all my years of literary labour, which has been a labour of love, I have never wanted to smoke or imbibe any special beverage to keep the wheels working, but I do think night is the most alluring time to write.

That "Mother of thoughts"—that sable-garbed enchantress with

her power to silence day—is a marvellous setting for brain work. No telephone calls, no ringing of bells, not even the tread of feet or the voices of one's dear ones to disturb attention. Every faculty can be given to the business in hand. It may be used as a profitable field for inventing the murderous thrills some writers live on, but I prefer to use its watches to induce the still soft stepping of words over the page like a song which the liquid notes of the nightingale has set in motion. Creation may sleep, but those who create romance need not.

I should like to know by what method Guy de Maupassant produced his novels. His intensity of observation captured the very essence of our erratic and ever-changing world, with the intellectual power and virility of genius. How fortunate are those born with a mind of diviner pattern than their fellows!

Talking of writing in bed I had a dear friend, Mrs. Gorst. She produced many novels and always wrote them in bed in the morning. She has long since passed beyond the veil, but I still recall my favourite book from her pen with its arresting title, *The Thief On the Cross*. She married Harold, second son of Sir John Gorst, the famous politician. Sir John's eldest son was Sir Eldon Gorst, well known as Consul-General in Egypt.

Harold and his wife Cecilia (her friends called her Nina) both wrote books, but of a very different kind. She made a special study of slum life and there was little she did not know of the London cockney. She had a real affection for Bank Holiday crowds and would spend hours among them getting local colour and mixing with men, women and children whose language and habits enthralled her. She drew many of her characters from days spent at 'appy 'ampstead and sometimes shocked her readers by making them use language taken first hand from nature's children.

The Harold Gorsts were frequently with us at "St. Albans" and were great acquisitions when we got up house parties in Bath at the home of Theodore's eldest brother, Campbell, since deceased. He lived alone with an ample staff to attend to his wants. We had an open invitation to bring friends whenever we liked to stay and I acted as hostess. We enjoyed every moment of those gay gatherings in such luxurious surroundings. Campbell was extraordinarily generous and one of his lovable little fads was that when we met the members of our party at Paddington they found, by the host's request, we had already taken their tickets. He even went so far, if his guests were not well off, as to insist they accepted from him the tips they naturally wished to give to the Cranwells' staff. The house was not in Bath itself, but on a slope half-way to Lansdowne. Its fluted columns gave peculiar charm to the architecture, while the prolific flower gardens and shrubberies shelving down to the entrance gates did full justice to Sir Jerom's art, that prince of landscape gardeners who designed the grounds with such perfect taste.

We were married in 1906 and it was before Campbell's untimely death three years later that Cranwells was a second home to us. Length of time cannot extinguish that memory, fragrant as the choice roses which bloomed round a fountain in the centre garden. By a secret but I believe easy expedient the water in that clear basin was always a delicious shade of cerulian blue. It would take a volume to describe the interior of Cranwells, with its exquisite old furniture, lovely pictures and magnificent draperies, some of which were used as chasubles in Italy 500 years ago. These fascinating surroundings made an ideal setting for Nina Gorst. In appearance she was not unlike Mrs. Patrick Campbell, with her raven hair, sparkling eyes and that vivid gipsy type of beauty rare in England. Her husband was very good looking, but utterly different, fair-haired, blue-eyed and quietly humorous. He had no desire to tread in his father's footsteps, political life did not appeal to him, though I think he was proud of his celebrated parent whose name will always be connected with "The Fourth Party." Nina was noted in her single days as the most famous palmist in London. The beautiful Miss Kennedy who told fortunes often caused a prolonged traffic block in Bond Street, when her society clients were storming that simple room where she received the highest in the land and even read the palms of Royalty.

One day young Harold Gorst decided to consult this popular oracle and went to learn his fate from the lips of his future wife. Nina told me the moment he entered the room she knew she must marry him. She was horribly annoyed and confused by this sudden knowledge, because she did not care for fair men. But the die was cast and it all worked out as she had inwardly predicted.

Nina could wear the most brilliant colours successfully and she certainly had a weird way with hats. Once they were past their prime she plunged them ruthlessly into a hot bath and stamped on the offending head-gear. This done, they were retrieved and while still wet she twisted and changed the shapes into delectable models which suited her to perfection. Perhaps it is as well such a brilliant creature did not live to be old to see her beauty wane!

Now that so many of our Cranwells guests have passed from this ken, those cheery yet peaceful days seem to belong to another life. When its large-hearted owner fell ill, Theodore and I stayed with him there in quiet retreat. He was still able to ride and one day when taking this favourite exercise on the Lansdowne heights, I wandered alone into the garden feeling dreadfully miserable. I could almost have believed the trees shared my sense of apprehension. The silver birches and those splendid specimens of the monkey tree, a feature on the sloping lawns, seemed to be sighing and sobbing faintly in the wind.

Then suddenly I heard Campbell's voice—loud and imperious—calling:

"Winifred! Winifred!"

It was so startlingly insistent and close behind the sombre set prickliness of the evergreen auracaria by which I was standing, that I felt something must be wrong. Evidently he had come back sooner than expected and wanted me immediately. I ran round the bush and looked everywhere, but the garden was empty, with not a soul in sight.

Amazed, I stood and listened, but the voice which had seemed almost at my elbow—was a voice only. Then a large black raven flew from the emerald grass high into the air. Campbell's clear definite "*Winifred!*" was to ring in my brain for days. I knew it was the death call as slowly and sadly I walked into the house.

CHAPTER III

HEAVEN LIES ABOUT US

IN the New Year of 1946 we were having tea over the fire on a foggy Sunday afternoon when an unexpected visitor arrived. It was that cheery author, Alasdair Alpin MacGregor. He blew in from Bracknell, Berkshire, to congratulate me on a good review he had read of my autobiography in *The Times Literary Supplement*. I was touched by his friendly enthusiasm, as from one author to another, and I confided to him that this book, so well received by the Press, had been run down rather bitterly by Howard Spring. He looked quite distressed because he shares my admiration for Howard Spring as a writer. We talked of this "critic author" and I learnt he had greatly encouraged Alasdair by warmly approving of his fascinating book *The Goat Wife*, in which a MacGregor Aunt and her wonderful home, with its herd of goats high up on a Scotch mountain, is so colourfully described. Alasdair had thanked Howard Spring for the notice and received in reply a signed copy of his book, *Heaven Lies About Us*, an account of his childhood in Cardiff.

I had not made the acquaintance of this outspoken work in which no early struggles against cramping poverty are withheld, so Alasdair promised to loan me the book. He sent it the next day, with a brief characteristic line:

"Well, now, you amazing Person!"

Here comes Howard Spring's *Heaven Lies About Us*.

I think it is one of the most beautifully sad things I've ever read."

I agree, *Heaven Lies About Us* tore at my heart-strings as it did at Alasdair's. One tries to trace Heaven in the pathetic tale of a checkered

boyhood, so heavily clouded by family misfortunes, so grimly realistic and in parts dramatically sordid.

We see this boy weary and bitterly ashamed, staggering under piles of other people's linen, washed by his plucky mother. With these huge loads on his back as he comes from the Cardiff Docks, he faces the jeers of boys who yell at him: "Your mother takes in washing," and he tells us: "By Heaven, she did!" To keep the family together that little five-foot widow worked her fingers to the bone. Only her indefatigable realism kept them afloat. Well, she brought up a son whose graphic pen has delighted many readers, so her labours were not in vain.

I think *Heaven Lies About Us* appealed specially to Alasdair because he also suffered in youth, though reared in very different circumstances. He too writes vividly of his early years. He has painted a pen portrait of his father, revealing the cruel character and sadistic tendencies of that overbearing Scot who made life miserable for his wife and family. His violent tempers, even to smashing his children's toys if their play disturbed him, acquaints the reader with one who seemed to possess no milk of human kindness.

But youth is elastic. Even this man of wrath could not crush all the *joie de vivre* out of young Alasdair and he writes of their simple amusements as arrestingly as he reveals family sufferings. He believes little happenings intrigue readers as much as important events and dwells on the sorrow he and his brother felt one frosty morning when they saw their favourite slide being destroyed by a man who scattered salt on the ice.

Like Howard Spring, Alasdair has successfully turned his early life into "copy." These revelations make me doubly thankful that I adored my parents who certainly deserved the adoration. Nothing gave them greater pleasure than to see their children happy. Mother loved taking us to theatres and sending us off in our best frocks to children's parties. I delighted in social functions, the only drawback being the fashion of crimped hair for children. In her endeavour to make me "a show piece," mother saw that the night before the event my long fair hair which always went its own sweet way, was screwed into innumerable tight little plaits which were often kept in all the following day until it was time to dress for the party. I felt humiliated, like Samson robbed of his locks, until the hour of release came. Then I sallied forth with a mane of glory, a change from hair which possessed no natural curl.

As Alasdair sat with us on this Sunday afternoon again my thirst to learn how my fellow-authors write set me questioning him about his output and methods of work. He told us that well-known book of his, *The Goat Wife: Portrait of a Village*, really made his name. It was published in 1939 and ran to roughly 110,000 words. This lightning writer completed it in four weeks! By the end of five weeks he had typed the manuscript himself, which must have been hard going. I consider I've done well if I complete a novel in three months. He enjoys the reputation of being

almost as well known as a photographer as an author and all his books are illustrated from his own photographs. These photographic inspirations are particularly helpful when writing his articles for *Country Life*. Then sunk deep in an armchair, with a map in his hand, he pours over it and waits for inspiration. His books on Scottish travel are most attractive. He creates lovely sea pieces while *Wayfaring in the Western Isles*, and lets us journey with him in fancy *Over the Sea to Skye*. It is fascinating to be initiated into the mysteries of *The Haunted Isles*. I think he has left part of his real self there, for in the most prosaic surroundings one feels he is a dreamer.

I was not surprised when he said: "You may not believe this, but I speak in public infinitely more easily and correctly than I write." He is a great talker. For a moment his flow of conversation was interrupted by tea being brought in. He took a sandwich from a dish at his side, then paused fearfully as it was on its way to his mouth.

"Is there any meat in this?" he asked in a tone of alarm.

I assured him the hidden contents were purely vegetable, and as I don't eat meat myself I could fully understand the views he expressed over our innocent sandwiches and cake.

"How can sensitive people go on eating with indifference the dead bodies of their fellow animals!" he exclaimed. Then added with a set look and a flash of the eye: "The very idea of it degrades me. Look at Christmas, that saturnalia of carols and carcasses!"

With sudden humility he added: "But I mustn't force my views on others, though I will say I am most thankful I've never been the father of a child."

Later he came back to the burning subject of the animal world. He told us ever since his student days he had been an uncompromising opponent of blood sports, vivisection and circuses, lamenting they were rooted institutions in this country.

"I know," he said, "one can make one's dog do all sorts of tricks by kindness, but you can't make a tiger leap through a ring of fire, through a blazing hoop slung over the middle of the stage—at a precise moment, on a precise day, by kindly methods."

He returned his graduation diplomas, in 1929, to the Principal in Edinburgh University, with the request that, as a protest against his Alma Mater's vivisectinal activities, the name of Alastair Alpin MacGregor might be removed from the list of alumni. Eventually his request was granted and he believes Ruskin resigned his Chair at Oxford as a protest against experiments on living animals there.

Changing this sad subject we talked of books and autobiographies in particular. I confided the fact I had just commenced a second volume of Memoirs and asked if he thought this would make too great a demand on the patience of my public.

He threw back his head and laughed at the question.

"Why," he declared, "I have already had four books published about myself and have two more ordered. Think of it—six in all and I am not nearly through my life's history yet."

Autobiographies certainly seem the rage, judging by the numerous volumes of self-revelation one meets on the shelves of lending libraries. There you will find the secrets of many well-known men and women who sigh for the fantasies of adolescence and while weaving a web of glamour over their past, they recapture it in meshes of analytic irony.

The Sitwells I feel are prominently in the front row of those who create dream palaces out of their baroque memories. I feel the thoughts they pen give them infinite pleasure which they like to spread. They deserve their large following, for the public should hear of things beautiful and lasting. Such memories help in these days when so much ugliness is abroad. Take Art, for instance, and shudder with me if you have had the misfortune to gaze at Picasso's pictures. I ask myself as I try to blot out the memory of these hateful productions, what is in the mind of so-called artists who produce on canvas abortions of monstrous conception and dare to call them works of Art? Surrealist paintings, degrading as they are hideous, merely serve to insult the human form as they obviously insult human intelligence. I wonder the Art world does not rise in bitter indignation against the swine-snouted objects supposed to represent our kind. There is, according to Granville Fell, Editor of *The Connoisseur*, evil intent in the deliberate dislocation of form and disharmony of colour in such pictures. Naturally a man of Mr. Fell's taste raises his eyebrows in shocked surprise that critics can be found to praise the unrestrained outpourings of hysterical neurotics.

Horrors in literature at least can be veiled discreetly between book covers.

It puzzles me how many people find it easy to weep over fiction or a play. Evidently they enjoy filling their tear ducts with the delicious salt of happy grief. If tears are as natural as smiles they should not be condemned as a sign of weakness. Yet it is strange that the saddest picture could hardly produce this form of emotion. Who has ever heard of visitors to an Art Gallery standing before a canvas which affords them the satisfaction of "a good cry"?

What is real happiness? I sometimes ask myself and one can only supply the answer by closely observing life. I met a really happy woman the other day, I will call her Janette, she would not like me to give her name. I talked to her of her childhood, so different from Alasdair's or Howard Spring's.

Janette, a woman well over seventy, is a perfect marvel on her feet, a ten-mile walk means nothing to her and she never admits fatigue. At night she lays her head on her pillow, falling immediately into a lovely sleep and does not open an eyelid till the morning. Perhaps you think I am writing of a lady of leisure. No, Janette commenced her life as a

domestic servant, then married and fulfilled single-handed all the arduous duties of a faithful wife and mother. But it is of her childhood I would speak.

"Tell me about your young days," I asked.

"Really," she replied, "I think in those old days children were happier than now, nothing seemed a trouble, though we were brought up hard. For instance, I and my small playmates walked five miles to school and five back, ten miles a day. Added to this, I always fetched the milk in the morning, that was an extra mile and a half across fields before starting to school. I was never late and always brought the four pints of skimmed milk back in time for our family breakfast. Cream was removed by a brass skimmer, there were no separators then and this item of our diet cost a penny a day. On our way to school we children used to dance arm-in-arm over the fields, or race along the country lanes, as happy as the larks. We took our dinner with us, just bread and butter, supplemented with some jam or cake, never any meat. Once a week we had pork at home, with Suffolk dumplings and gravy, a very welcome meal. We thought it wonderful at Christmas, when a farmer's wife sent us some beef as a present. To see this rare dish on the table being carved for the family thrilled us children. We wondered how it felt to eat meat every day, like the ladies at the Hall. On our way to school we sometimes met these important ladies in their large carriage and we were supposed to curtsey to them as they drove past. We resented this order, saying amongst ourselves: 'Why should we? Who are they?' So when the state vehicle came in view we concealed ourselves in the ditch to avoid making the required obeisance. I fear the haughty eyes of those stiff figures in the landau sometimes caught sight of the tops of our heads and wondered why we were hiding in the ditch. When the Hall ladies honoured our school with a visit it was very different and the order to curtsey was never disobeyed."

I could picture this little pantomime under hedges decked with wild roses or white with hoar frost and I laughed with those children of sixty or more years ago, who disliked the stiff upright figures in the huge landau as it rolled past.

How the young legs of this generation would crumple up at the mere thought of a ten-mile walk to gather the seeds of learning! Now in country districts they drive in a chartered motor-bus, or if only two or three live beyond walking distance (as distance is measured to-day) a special taxi is provided.

"Tell me some of your happiest recollections of childhood," I said.

Janette thought for a moment, then her face lighted up, a face that mirrors calm serene thoughts. I can say with my hand on my heart I have known her for years without finding one flaw in her character—so much for an upbringing which would seem almost uncivilised to modern youth with its luxuries provided by the State.

"Sunday," she said, "was the day we looked forward to. Our great treat was to go for a walk with father and mother in the afternoon and accompany them in the morning to the Baptist Chapel. Worshippers from a distance brought their dinner to eat in the Vestry after service, where they made themselves hot tea heated from a copper outside. Pinches of tea screwed up in newspaper were pooled into the large teapots. Two long tables in the Vestry, with forms for us to sit on, made the picnic meal an easy one. Each person placed their own basket of eatables in front of them, while teapots occupied each end of the table."

"Quite like a party," I declared. "I expect they enjoyed themselves."

"Indeed they did!" laughed Janette and her eyes sparkled at the recollection. "It was quite a social event and what a lot of chatter went on with the farmers talking of their live-stock and other mutual interests. On the way to Chapel the congregation made a regular procession, many women pushing prams—in fact, it looked as if they were going to a fair."

"Different from the modern Sunday," I said, "when so many places of worship are empty."

Janette nodded and a serious expression came on her face as she replied: "No high jinks then like young and old indulge in to-day. Why, nothing was ever cooked in our cottage on the Sabbath, not even a potato, though the kettle was allowed to boil."

It sounded like the old Bible days when she spoke of the gleaning at harvest time, which kept them in flour for the three worst months of the winter. Home-brewed beer was their staple drink until the law stepped in and stopped this practice. She remembered an old man who had never seen a train till a kind neighbour promised him the great treat of actually having a ride in one. All the villagers were eager to know what he would say on his return and waited to hear his comments, expecting him to be full of excitement and wonder. To their disappointment he was quite unmoved, merely remarking dubiously: "Well, I could see no art in it, I just sit and the train went along."

I turned to the subject of dress and asked what they did when they wanted clothes.

"We were often given garments," she said, "outgrown by neighbours' children and these generally needed alteration. So a work woman would come for sixpence a day and her food, bringing with her a treadle sewing-machine. Her husband wheeled it on a barrow to our door in the morning and fetched it back in the evening. Sixpence for a long day's work sounds sweated labour now, but she could not well ask more because a labourer's wages were only ten shillings a week and horse men got thirteen shillings. Five pounds earned for harvest money had to pay the rent. In many cases this was supplemented by keeping a pig, so when Parliament passed an Act forbidding this, it was a severe blow to the poor man."

"Life must have been a problem for them," I said, but Janette smiled, as if only remembering the sunny side.

"I love to think of my childhood," she declared, "the cottage with its comfortable living-room and brick floor covered with home-made rugs seemed perfect to me. Those rugs were made from old cloth snipped from the boys' and men's worn-out jackets or trousers, and the work of making them kept us busy and amused during the long winter evenings. We were never dull."

"Had you a nice view!" I asked.

"We thought it lovely, just green fields and a windmill across the meadowland. I learnt the riddle of the sails before I could read. As small mites we were all able to tell the way of the wind. That noted windmill was unfortunately burnt down a few years ago. How I should miss it if I went back to the old home now!"

The scene pictured by Janette is conspicuously removed from the drawing Howard Spring presents of dreary back roads in Cardiff where he struggled pitifully for existence.

Suffering is a teacher, suffering has a tongue. Who knows if the success he has attained may not have been quickened in those early years by "the hateful blessing of poverty"!

One cannot think of poverty in connection with Janette, infinite riches were stored in her cottage home. When she drew the drinking water for the family from the pond across the road, those still waters symbolised the waters of comfort in the 23rd Psalm. Lucky Janettes of the world fear neither life nor death, they have always a rod and staff to comfort them.

I often think how marvellous it would be if we could look deep deep down into the hearts of those around us. Instead, we merely see what they select to show us and hear the words they choose us to hear. If we could truly diagnose souls I feel we should find something of God's power, God's love and God's life in all mankind.

Of one thing I am certain, we are not grateful enough for things which seem commonplace and we let them pass unnoticed.

I am specially grateful for imagination, that glorious treasury in the Storehouse of the mind—and for dreams.

The Heaven which lies about us in infancy, at any age, at any hour, can step into our sleep. Laughable things, mere trifles—mix in strangest medley and who is not the better for a happy dream? So let us recapture the charm of the past and all will be well for a few golden moments.

It may be just the memory of a harvest moon riding across a spangled sky when you were first in love, or the way a line of disconsolate ducks tickled your sense of humour as they waddled across a frozen pond. When the winter world lay decked in fairy white, it was such fun throwing those snowballs—till one of them broke a window. These trivial flash-

backs of the past, extinguished as quickly as the crackle of fire under some logs in a wood, hold their secret magic. Sophisticated Reader, you are looking quizzical, perhaps you see nothing in these mind records, these flashbacks of early years, and the red light shines out with the one word—*Stop!*

I pull up—and end this chapter.

CHAPTER IV

PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM AND SOME HAMILTONS

I HAVE just heard this day, February 3rd, 1946, that my friend Phillips Oppenheim has passed away peacefully in his sleep at his home, "Le Vauquiedor" near Saint Peter Port, Guernsey. It is long since I had a talk with him, or a sight of his cheery face.

The last I heard of this famous thriller-writer makes a characteristic picture of a man so determined and purposeful that no persuasion could turn him from a course he had once decided to follow. When France was being invaded, Noel Fisher, with crowds of scared residents fleeing from the Riviera in coal boats, saw a large Rolls Royce drawn up by the quay. In this luxurious car a portly figure, sunk deep on cushions, watched the harrowing exit of his fellow-creatures who were willing to be herded like cattle on these filthy boats, in their agony to escape the Germans. They wondered why he was so slow in joining the heated crowds. Then suddenly the word went round—Phillips Oppenheim had seen enough and intended to remain behind. Friends and acquaintances, appalled by this foolhardiness, surrounded his car and implored him to change his mind. But nothing they could say had the smallest effect, and the nightmare boats went out to sea leaving this Prince of Story-Tellers to his fate. His readers learnt later how he saved his skin and reached safety after many adventures. I verily believe he would not have survived the sea journey under such appalling conditions.

We first met him early in our married life when he was living at Sheringham in Norfolk and was a well-known figure on the golf course. I was delighted to be introduced to this best seller for I loved talking to authors, especially to one with his enormous public. For half a century he turned out at least two novels a year and twenty million copies of his books were sold. We invited him to dinner at our hotel which was holding a fancy dress ball that night. Before he arrived, Theodore was suddenly seized with influenza and had to take to his bed. I wanted to put Mr. Oppenheim off, but Theodore would not let me and insisted on

my going down to entertain our dinner guest. I should have thoroughly enjoyed a *tête-à-tête* meal with such an attractive talker under any other circumstances, but with my heart in the sick-room upstairs, it was an effort to play up to my amusing companion. Later I was thankful I obeyed Theodore and cemented our friendship with Phillips that night, for no one could have been kinder or more helpful than he proved. If he had been my brother or father he could not have done more to ease my burden as anxiety grew. When Theodore was able in a very weak state to journey home, it was this new friend who saw to everything, including the transport of our luggage.

Always things seemed to happen queerly when we met. The first time he lunched with us at Hampton Court, there was a freak storm which flooded our house. Water rushed under the hall door and it was a case of all hands aboard. With trousers tucked up—I can see him now, sweeping away the incoming torrent, his rotund face sparkling with humour as he shouted: "Save the women and children first!"

We have no family, so there were not any children to enter into the merriment which only became funny in the middle of a luncheon-party because of the high spirits of our chief guest.

Another time when I was really troubled Phillips appeared unexpectedly out of the blue to buoy me up and turn a trying situation into a huge joke. I had been asked to a big London Bazaar to sell at the bookstall. When I arrived alone, I found I was single handed, all the promised assistants having failed at the last moment. It seemed almost impossible to cope with the crowds. I felt badly let down as I could have brought any number of willing helpers with me. Then suddenly a face appeared to see how many Oppenheim books I had on the stall. To my delight there stood Phillips himself, who at once realized my predicament. No passing by on the other side; instantly he became the good Samaritan. He had only meant to look in for a few minutes, but for the rest of the afternoon he worked at my side with a right good will. I told all my customers who he was and his sparkling chit-chat kept buyers hanging round the stall enthralled by his buoyant personality. It was worth buying a book to get a word with the creator of spies, glittering gamblers, sinister diplomats, mysterious ladies and other intriguing characters generally drawn against a background of international intrigue. He signed his books too and demanded a big price for the autograph in the name of charity.

At his Woking house where we visited him, he showed me his dictaphone and begged me to emulate his method of churning out novels. I simply could not bear the idea, the instrument seemed so soulless in comparison to dictating to my sympathetic secretary.

One of Phillips' chief charms lay in his unabashed pretence of being in love with every woman he met, a farce of course, or his wife could not have looked so happy.

The last time we met was at Monte Carlo when a Press photographer snapped us standing together on the Casino steps. This picture of past years amuses me now because the dress I was really proud of looks quite grotesque. "Worth" created it, a white serge affair with a ridiculous brilliant blue sash tied almost round my knees. I often think fashion is a microbe; we get bitten with unusual confections and hypnotised into admiring them for a brief season. Phillips looks so vital in that photograph, it is difficult to believe when he entered his new life to-day that he left eighty years of mortal existence behind him.

Another friend of ours who some time ago passed out of our ken was Sir Archibald Hamilton, that most eccentric Baronet who in turn shocked and delighted the visitors and residents of Selsey Bill, where we often stayed for a short holiday on account of its bracing air. A week there seemed to do us more good than a month at any other seaside resort. We were first introduced to its windy shores by my faithful friend and Editor, Peter Keary, a partner of Sir Arthur Pearson. Peter Keary loved Selsey because there was always a wind and his large family could run wild there and ride their horses bare-backed on the vast sands. Sir Patrick Hastings was also a near neighbour. Whatever the Selsey-ites thought of Sir Archibald, they could hardly help being amused by his unusual personality. He was tall, sunburnt, with sandy hair and loved to expose his manly chest in almost shameless déshabillé. It pleased him to speak in early English, so instead of saying: "Will you come to lunch on Sunday?" he gave the invitation in the following words: "Dear Lady, wilt thou partake of the midday meal with me on the Sab-a-oth?" Or he would invite you to "the dish of tea." Even when he was addressing our chauffeur, for he often motored with us, he adopted this strange form of speech and always spoke to servants with the courtesy he would have shown a Duchess. No one looked on him as entirely normal, yet he dominated that community. Everyone knew him, everyone talked of him, he hovered between being the wild man or the King of Selsey. His house on the seashore was freakish beyond words, so packed with family heirlooms one could hardly move for the treasures crowded on tables, shelves and walls. Not an inch of hanging space could be seen between pictures and suspended ornaments. The large dining-room table was covered with old silver, rare china, snuff boxes, etc., and could never be used for a meal. He and his guests fed in the kitchen! Once when we were bathing with him I undressed in one of the bedrooms and hardly knew where to place my clothes, as even the chairs were occupied by small antiques, while a table by the bed was ornamented with death masks. He was living alone when we knew him, after a hectic matrimonial career. His first wife who divorced him in 1902 was a FitzGeorge, granddaughter of the late Duke of Cambridge. His son, a Lieutenant in the Grenadier Guards, was killed in action in 1918.

Archie's second wife whom nobody seemed to know, left him some

time before we met. Later he turned Mohammedan like Lord Headley and we imagined those marriage laws suited Archie to perfection.

When professional Concert Parties came to the village Hall he was the first to welcome them and was frequently at their performances, cheering and clapping. One entertainment took place in a large marquee and our visit there cost Theodore a pair of evening trousers. It was a very high tent supported by three forty feet posts. Each post had a bottle of beer at the top and the Manager asked for three competitors from the audience to swarm up if possible and get the beer. Theodore and two others stepped forward and volunteered for the stunt. To my great surprise Theodore swarmed up at an amazing pace, reaching the top and grasping the prize. The other competitors only got a quarter of the way up their posts. Alas! as he slipped quickly down, grasping the bottle, there were splinters in the pole and his lower extremities were a sight to behold. There were loud cheers and the whisper went round he was a Naval man. On his return to London, a visit to his tailor proved it was a very expensive bottle of beer.

I do not know what illness Archie succumbed to after we lost touch with him, for he had a powerfully built body and lived almost entirely for his health, being terrified of falling sick. He was a familiar figure in the early morning, when almost nude on the sands he went through violent exercises and raced up and down after his dip in the sea. When he went to spend a day at Brighton, he dressed in full Highland kit, which greatly tickled both waiters and guests at the Hotel Metropole. His method was full dress, or practically no dress at all! He was proud of his family and was descended from the sixth Earl of Abercorn.

I have known many Hamiltons, all very different types. One I specially admired was my father's great friend, Admiral de Courcy Hamilton, head of the London Fire Brigade. My father's great work for the Fire Service, which I described in *That Reminds Me*—, was a strong link between them—he being pioneer and Captain of the Volunteer Fire Brigade at Hampton-on-Thames which was trained by him to become the most renowned Brigade in England, winning countless victories at tournaments throughout Great Britain. But my father's chief hobby was the "National Fire Brigade's Widows' and Orphans' Fund." By his efforts he raised it from a few hundreds to £21,000. My father admired both the outstanding leadership of his old friend Sir Eyre Shaw and his friend, the Admiral, of later days, they were such splendid leaders of men. During their two reigns at Headquarters we enjoyed many delightful parties which always included a display of fireworks in the huge yard and a turn out in response to a bogus call, for the benefit of the visitors.

Then there was Mr. de Courcy Hamilton, who lived in Wales. He brought a very beautiful Swedish chalet home with him after enjoying a stay in that pleasant country and had it rebuilt on Welsh soil. It was a proud moment when this bulky mass of mysterious luggage displayed its

foreign charms in Celtic surroundings. The natives came from a distance to admire this unusual structure of which the owner was not a little proud. I have in my autobiography spoken of my father-in-law's outstanding philanthropy. Only to-day I received a letter from the Rev. David Jenkins, in which he says the name of Theodore's father, Richard Cory, is cherished in the memory of the old families in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan and that Mr. de Courcy Hamilton was one of his very ardent helpers in his numerous good works. Mr. Jenkins, Rector of St. Brides-super-Ely, held some little while ago religious services for 600 men who built an American Hospital near his Parish. He gained a victory over the Bolshy Leader who objected to the prayer meetings and intending to stop these missionary proclivities, put it to the vote in his absence. Thirty-nine men voted for the Bolshy and five hundred for the continuation of those dinner-hour services.

The last Hamilton that comes to my mind was a charming guest at a party given by Mittie, Lady Rossmore in the Stud House, her attractive residence in the Home Park, Hampton Court. It is sad to think a cruel bomb made it uninhabitable and drove from this neighbourhood one of our sweetest friends. Mittie was seated by a window when the bomb exploded and though covered with glass was miraculously not injured. She is always so dainty and soignée, it would have been too cruel if Fate had allowed her to share the bruises and disfigurements that the lovely house received. Her luncheon parties were a great addition to the social life of this neighbourhood. At these pleasant functions we always met delightful people. Mrs. Rowan-Hamilton was one of them, and hearing we were interested in historical houses she kindly asked us to lunch at her Surrey home, Slyfield Manor, Stoke d'Abernon. We motored over on a hot summer's day when the garden bloomed with masses of lavender and everywhere the eye turned, flowers formed a sea of colour. The house had been occupied by Cromwell and his men who carved their initials on the panelling. I had never before seen gates at the foot of an indoor staircase and as we opened them to go up to the room where Cromwell slept, I felt as if I were entering another world. Certainly the psychic vibrations were very strong in that house and I found it quite difficult to shake them off when a large party sat down to lunch at a long very narrow refectory table and ordinary conversation was bandied to and fro. Mrs. Rowan-Hamilton came to our old house, but later on we lost sight of her. That is the worst of having a large acquaintance, it is difficult to keep pace with all the nice people you meet.

Talking of old houses, I have already told my public so much about our historical home, "St. Albans," that I felt there would be little need to mention it in this volume of memories and observations. But oddly enough a friend, Captain Inman of Eaton Lodge, Hampton-on-Thames, visited the British Museum and took the opportunity to look up Hampton,

which he found in the Victoria County History of Middlesex. Now we always thought Nell Gwynn named this house after her son the first Duke of St. Albans, but instead we now learn the following—I am quoting from this History of Middlesex:

"In 1218-19 Henry of St. Albans was permitted by Henry III to retain the Manor of Hampton, which he only held for a short time as in 1237 he sold it to Terrice de Nussa, Prior of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem in England, for 1,000 marks."

Now it seems likely that our home was named after the said Henry of St. Albans.

On page 320 of *The Victoria County History of Middlesex* it says after mentioning "The Cedars," the grounds of which originally adjoined our property:

"The next house is a picturesque building called 'St. Albans.' It was originally built for Nell Gwynn by Charles II. The local tradition is that it was occupied at a later period by George FitzClarence, 1st Earl of Munster, son of William II."

Further evidence goes to prove that Nell Gwynn's son was named after the house instead of the house being named after him, as we previously believed.

The story is well known (it may be truth or fiction) that Nell Gwynn stood at a window with her baby son in her arms and looking down at her Kingly lover below, threatened [to throw the child out unless he was instantly given a title, whereupon Charles II called loudly:

"Save the Duke of St. Albans!"

I wonder if Nell Gwynn loved this house as I do. I like to think that the debonair Monarch who delighted in planting and building possibly helped with ideas when this garden was laid out and the river home erected for his Nellie. I picture him walking up and down our lawn accompanied by a number of little spaniels which always followed him and slept in his bed chamber. I feel this idle improvident Monarch was probably at his best with his humble partner, whose charitable instincts left their mark on the country. The occupant of "St. Albans" was so different from the handsome and greedy Barbara Villiers whom he made Duchess of Cleveland and other worthless female favourites. Let us hope the royal lovers were happy under this roof. They seem to have left such a peaceful atmosphere.

People with quickness of apprehension often "sense" something that lingers from the past in this riverside dwelling. I think that happy days reverberate down the halls of time and it is tragic to remember the pitiful plea of Charles on his death-bed, when turning to his brother he said appealingly: "Let not poor Nellie starve."

CHAPTER V

LLANTARNAM ABBEY AND ITS OWNER

I HAVE been looking at some beautiful needlework and it brought home to me the power of the needle which can be on a par with the painter's brush or the pen of the ready writer in creating lasting loveliness.

Theodore and I were lunching with Gertrude Lady Cory at her luxurious flat in Albert Hall Mansions which so narrowly escaped being blitzed in a big London raid, when all the inhabitants had to clear out at a moment's notice. The unpleasant proximity to an unexploded bomb threatened life and property, and it was fortunate for our hostess that certain treasures in that flat, which have a highly sentimental value, were preserved. I allude to the tapestry on the attractive Italian chairs, worked by her son, Sir Vyvian Cory. Vyvian and his mother were the closest friends, yet she was not the least possessive and wanted him to marry. But a cruel fate decreed this young bachelor, with so much to live for and so full of life, was to prove one of the victims of the Café de Paris tragedy. From the gaiety of the dance in the midst of music and light-hearted pleasure, death rained down its fiery weapons and Vyvian was rushed to Hospital, where he lingered for a week. His distracted mother at his bedside had the agony of watching him die by inches. Now with the pluck of so many who were bereaved by the war, she lives to radiate love to other members of her family. So pretty, with her young figure and face crowned by white hair faintly tinted blue, she has surrounded herself with specimens of her son's skill.

As I examined the floral designs and colourful figures on the tapestry seats and the banner he worked of his own Coat of Arms, all in such exquisite taste, Gertrude described the rather strange way in which he produced these masterpieces. To begin with they were all done with his left hand, while he puffed at his pipe to the accompaniment of gramophone records, Sibelius being his favourite composer. Then he chose the dainty colours himself, which was remarkable because often while working he had to ask his mother to distinguish between one colour and another, as he was slightly colour blind. After hard days of National work this art of the needle gave him the relaxation he required and I hope his productions will be preserved for many generations.

Vyvian's brother Clinton is the present Baronet.

Gertrude, the widow of the late Sir Donald Cory, is not to be confused with the wife of Theodore's cousin, the late Sir Clifford Cory, who lives in Belgrave Square. After she and Clifford had a legal separation, she lived with Lord and Lady Carew, the latter being her devoted sister. It was a great blow to Annie when Lady Carew died, for the sisters were

inseparable and did everything together, including many week-end visits to friends.

Clifford's widow lives at 28 Belgrave Square and contemplates reviving her famous musical parties. Before the war she was one of the best known hostesses in London. If Kreisler, in whose honour she frequently gave lavish entertainments, returns to London she will certainly bid him to her hospitable board to meet the well-known people who graced her parties in the past. She and Kreisler are the greatest friends and I believe hers was the only private house in London at which he ever consented to play.

After six years of war spent in the country, it seems like a little bit of old London to see this Victorian hostess established again in the familiar home, and I am told hers is one of the few large houses in Belgravia occupied at the present time by a private resident.

It is appalling to think of the masses of boxes which had to be unpacked when she re-opened the familiar premises. Personally I am all for space, crowded treasures however beautiful lose some of their enchantment for me when they testify to their owner's love of collecting. I was never a collector because I have a natural antipathy to accumulation. Theodore shares these views. He says he loves the dignity of space which helps to display to advantage a few choice pieces. He infinitely prefers this to having a mass of exhibits which are lost when crowded together.

It is lucky we don't all think alike, or people who visit Annie Cory's storehouse of treasures would have lost a real treat. I prefer to see these things than to live with them and to be shown over her domain is like visiting a museum.

So now the dust sheets which during the war veiled so much that is interesting have been swept away to reveal those glass cases filled with mechanical figures that sing and dance as if they had never been hidden from the light. One could almost imagine they smile gratitude at the one who winds them up and sets them in motion. Once again china ornaments and little gold coaches fill the cupboards, while a vast quantity of paintings and old prints are on show in their original places.

Vyvian Cory's love of beautiful needlework seemed associated with our name because Annie Lady Cory has a positive passion for the art of the needle. She is not contented with chair covers and cushions to display this intricate talent, she has launched out into something greater. For instance, hanging on her walls are almost life-sized pictures, specimens of the finest wool work. Crammed with minutest detail these woollen pictures are really family pieces, because the sisters Clory and Carew with their own fair hands stitched them laboriously, copying famous paintings with consummate skill. If my head aches at the thought of the stored-away boxes being unearthed, always the sight of magnificent needlework sets my eyes aching. That is the worst of being imaginative, probably

those sisters' eyes never ached at all as stitch by stitch they created that wealth of work.

One cannot speak of Annie's collection of striking exhibits without mentioning her love for relics of Queen Victoria. From girlhood, when the young Miss Lethbridge, who later married our cousin, was presented at Queen Victoria's Court, the Queen Empress became her idol. Among the many curiosities in the Belgrave Square house, I think the most treasured of all is the Queen's heavy black moiré dress, edged with crêpe. Old lace and silk stockings worn by the same royal owner are other souvenirs owned by Lady Cory.

Naturally our family interests centred in her husband, Clifford, who also did a great deal of entertaining both in London and Monmouthshire. Theodore and I were his frequent guests at dinners and dances in town and on visits to his fascinating country seat, Llantarnam Abbey, near Newport. It would take a volume to enumerate the many offices he filled in his active life. In Parliament he sat for the St. Ives Division of Cornwall for many years and was Chairman of Cory Brothers. He was a great polo player and had his own polo ground on his Monmouthshire estate, and among other hobbies he enjoyed hunting, shooting and farming.

He took us to some delightful Hunt Balls in our younger days, when the lack of certain amenities in his big Abbey astonished me, especially on my first visit there as a bride. The huge fire-places blazing on all sides camouflaged the lack of central heating and were even sufficient to warm the lofty entrance hall with its Minstrel Gallery and long church-like stained-glass windows. We were given comfortable adjoining bedrooms where fires also blazed. Then in this home of luxury—came a surprise. My astonishment was great to see an old-fashioned round bath placed on the hearthrug, with large steaming cans of water for my ablutions. The Abbey, with its numerous apartments for visitors, boasted no bathrooms! The large staff seemed to make nothing of carrying cans down the endless corridors and stoking fires from morning till night.

Only a few years before Clifford died at the age of eighty, he decided suddenly to inaugurate bathrooms and central heating. He never did things by halves. Stately marble bathrooms were arranged and owing to the great thickness of the old Abbey walls these alterations cost over £3,000. The floor of the gun-room when taken up for central heating pipes revealed buried human skeletons hundreds of years old, probably monks.

It seemed like looking back into another world to visualize those gay days! Now another picture takes the foreground. When the late war was imminent our kind cousin Clifford, fearing London and its precincts would be invaded, insisted on our coming to Llantarnam Abbey where he pressed us to stay as his guests for the duration. We remained there for about three months when war work, chiefly connected with the



THE ENTRANCE TO LLANTARNAM ABBEY



LLANTARNAM ABBEY

Red Cross, called us home. My official Red Cross working party at "St. Albans" had to be organized and until the Red Cross supplied us with knitting wool and materials, we personally provided everything at our own expense.

But to return to the outbreak of hostilities. It was at Llantarnam Abbey we heard war declared on the radio. My sister Evelyn, two cousins, Evelyn and Cynthia Cory and Theodore's bachelor brother Robert, were in that family party and during the months we spent together no dissenting word disturbed our happy relations. Though the days were full of tension and anxiety, we none of us got on each other's nerves. But the remoteness of the Abbey and its extreme quiet became almost unbearable before we broke away, eager for work and useful activity.

Clifford did not like our leaving and it is pleasant to remember he seemed to enjoy having us all round him.

The Abbey was founded about 1300, but little of the original building remains, except the stout outer walls, the rest having been practically rebuilt. Despite its stalwart exterior, there was a distinct feeling of insecurity so far as protection against enemy action was concerned. There were two drives to the outer gates, each half a mile long and my heart missed some beats one day when I saw less than a dozen elderly yokels drilling in a field by a caravan in which they slept. They were our only protectors at that time in case of invasion!

Later the Military arrived to fill the local Inn and the roads were packed with Army vehicles making for the front.

Clifford, who never refused us anything, had an extraordinary way of inspiring awe in his dependants and ran the house in spartan fashion. For instance, no visitor was allowed even to put a lump of coal on the fire, the bell had to be rung for the butler to perform this simple office. Early to bed was another fetish in which Clifford expected us to collaborate; so we all trooped upstairs soon after ten o'clock to listen to the wireless in our bedrooms. Occasionally we crept down again, made up the waning fire and unknown to our host broke the rigid rule of retirement.

Every night he held a brief service in the private Chapel. Punctually the door would be flung open and the butler announced in a stentorian voice: "Prayers, Sir Clifford!" Whereupon we all rose and followed him like obedient sheep through the high hall and dingy passages to the Chapel in the Abbey. Sleepy servants sat at the back with the house-keeper in front occupying a solitary pew. I always felt this enforced custom was not welcomed by the staff after working hard all day, but woe betide any who failed to appear spotlessly clothed to listen while Clifford read the scriptures and prayed from a very old-fashioned prayer book. He was extremely Low Church, no flowers were ever allowed on the altar and certainly not a cross. Even our Book of Common Prayer had to be

modified, the words "Holy *Catholic* Church" being changed to "*Anglican* Church," since the word Catholic was taboo.

He did not have a resident Private Chaplain, but each week-end engaged a different clergyman who arrived to stay at the Abbey and conduct Sunday services and Sunday School, which the tenants on the estate and their children attended.

My favourite Padre was a younger brother of our old and valued friend, Bishop Welldon, his presence provided real refreshment.

A charming little Church adjoined the Abbey grounds, but neither Clifford nor his guests ever attended service there, since it was considered too high. So far as orthodox religion is concerned, Theodore and I call ourselves a happy medium. Dissentions among religious sects seem like the work of the devil, since it separates God's people and plays into the hands of the angel of Darkness. We should all do well to pray for "the bond of peace" among Christians. A girl who was asked her religion is said to have replied: "My father is a Protestant, my mother a Roman Catholic, Granny is a Baptist and I am Radio!"

Certainly the services that come across the air fill the bill for many non-Church-goers, who prefer to worship in an armchair by their own fireside.

When I remember the meals at Llantarnam in those early days of war, they seem fantastic and impossible, the breakfast dishes on the sideboard, the lavish display of eggs, the dessert at lunch and dinner, with as many as eight different choices at times when muscat grapes and other home-grown fruit abounded. Always bananas were put at night in Theodore's room as he was known to like them and crystallized ginger with other sweets ornamented the dining-table. We all enjoyed the good things procurable and I often wonder if Clifford missed his luxuries before the wheels of life at last stood still for him. He carried on the family tradition of lavish generosity to charities and all good works. God rest his soul!

The days in that secluded retreat were much alike except for the stirring war news and as this was banned at meals I often racked my brains for conversation. I sat always on Clifford's right, facing the long dining-room windows which afforded me the pleasure of feasting my eyes on the formal garden which met pasture land bordered by high wooded hills. These made a blaze of colour in autumn when the mingled beauties of crimson, gold and green soothed my spirit like a sedative. Just when the leaves were on the turn I had a most peculiar dream. I dreamt one night that I saw a great oak tree (a favourite of mine in a field near the drive) rising up in the air, its huge branches reaching heavenwards, while the substantial roots left a cavity beneath. I described this dream to Theodore and said that same morning I must go and look at the oak tree which had behaved so strangely in my vision of the night. As we stood beneath its shade I felt I must have a piece of the oak, I did not

know why, but the impulse was strong. Theodore broke off a graceful stalk heavy with leaves and I carried it back to put in a vase in my room. As we approached the Abbey, Evelyne Cory came quickly out of the front door looking very grave.

"Isn't it terrible," she said, "*The Royal Oak* has been sunk!"

Then I knew in a flash my dream was prophetic. The rising oak was the tree of life torn from its roots symbolizing the mounting heavenwards of the gallant crew from the sinking ship.

Sorrowfully I carried my oak spray upstairs, feeling it was "in memoriam" of yet another tragic disaster at sea.

The Abbey staircase always appealed to me as dramatic and would have looked well on the stage. At each turning it was guarded by a life-sized figure in armour holding up a lantern illuminated by modern electricity, which threw its beams on enormous pictures.

We took our little dog, Jill, with us to Llantarnam without a by-your-leave. I risked her being a "gate-crasher" as I was afraid Clifford might say he could not extend the invitation to our treasured pet. To my relief she was most kindly received and appeared to thoroughly enjoy her surroundings. I can see her now on the lawn gnawing enormous bones almost as big as herself, prizes from the immense kitchen built to supply the requirements of a vast assembly of monks.

Jill is a miniature black Pomeranian and though of foreign origin, has any amount of British assertiveness and always gets her own way. This tiny creature dominates us and our household, but she reached the peak of canine ambition at Llantarnam when she had a splendid fox hunt "all on her own."

We were walking one morning down the pine avenue which led to the farm and Jill as usual was skirting around in search of rabbits, when suddenly she put up from under some bushes a very big fox which could have turned on her and destroyed her with one snap of its long jaws. Instead the creature raced away as if a pack of hounds were at its heels, followed by Jill in wild pursuit. She did not give up the chase till Reynard was well out of sight. It certainly afforded us vast amusement to watch the noble attempt made by those small legs to keep pace with the swift sinuous movements of a fox in full cry. We used to hear foxes barking sometimes at night.

The Abbey grounds have a charming lake with a romantic looking house-pavilion from which the monks fished. A pair of stately white swans and a pure black one, crimson beaked, added to the picturesqueness of the scene. But a morning came when only half the body of one white swan remained, the other half having been devoured by a murderous fox who must have caught and killed the graceful bird while sleeping on the bank. In that estate of 2,000 acres the lake makes a peaceful retreat, with tall trees for a background.

I should hate to go back to Llantarnam now to see it with its beauty marred and no longer the residence of a private individual. If the ghosts of the monks who dwelt there could look on the scene of devastation, I wonder would they curse the modern axe which hacked down so many of those noble pine trees to help the war?

Before leaving Llantarnam I must not omit to mention the famous tithe barn in the grounds which I think is one of the oldest in England. Only the shell now stands, the roof having fallen in. The walls, about five feet thick, are shrouded in ivy and decorated with moss. Surely no vandal will destroy that monument to the tithe-gatherer of ancient days where birds now nest! It was built when Cistercian Monks founded the Abbey in the 13th Century.

How sad is the thought that so many famous historical houses are being taken over as public institutions, the old families fade away and the soul of the place dies. With our present heavy death duties and withering taxation we see noble mansions gradually being eliminated one by one.

Bacon truly said: "It is a reverend thing to see an ancient castle or building not in decay."

Alas! most of the stately homes of England seem doomed to house strangers. Stripped by democracy of their pride and personality they are merely fairy castles in the memory of recent owners whose ancestors occupied them for centuries.

Still, we know love lives in cottages. A poor man's cottage can be stronger than a mansion when the food in its larder is savoured by love. I adore the great richness of the word "Love." It comprises so much. What a small word to express things indestructible! Only the other day Theodore said—looking at our little black Jill: "Isn't it amazing how much love can be packed into such a tiny body?"

This made me think of a poem I found among some old papers of my mother's on a Christmas card dated 1937. It was sent her by that talented actress Evelyn Moore and had a picture not unlike Jill. Evidently Mother preserved it because she must have felt as I do the touching truths in the poem by Elizabeth Gardner Reynolds. The lines are headed: *The Little Black Dog*.

I should like to quote this poem in full, but as I do not know where to find the author and ask her permission, I dare not for fear of infringing her copyright. Instead, I will give my readers the gist of her charming idea.

She wonders in simply expressed verse if Christ had a little black dog like her own, with its tender brown eyes and silky ears. She feels if He had, that the little dog would have known from the first that He was God and would have worshipped the ground He trod on. But she fears He hadn't, because He prayed alone in the Garden when His friends and disciples forsook Him and fled. The little black dog would certainly

have never left our Lord, but licking His dear fingers clasped in agony, would have trotted behind Him when they took Him away, following Him right to the Cross.

It is a beautiful thought, the faithfulness of dumb animals shames many a human heart. I pity the man or woman who has never known the love of a dog!

CHAPTER VI

TAGG'S ISLAND

IN my autobiography I gave a full account of my anti-Mormon campaign which lasted many years and managed to practically drive the proselytising Elders out of England. I told how I exposed their loathsome doctrines and underhand methods in a series of novels, but I did not mention that in 1924 one of these novels: *Eve and the Elders*, was dramatized by a young relative of mine, Roy Graham Telfer. It was his first attempt at playwriting, though he was known on the London stage as a promising actor and specially distinguished himself in television.

This anti-Mormon propaganda play was produced with a strong amateur cast by the Cardinal Operatic and Dramatic Society at the Karsino Theatre on Karno's Island, better known as Tagg's Island, Hampton Court. Two evening Club performances were given of *Eve and the Elders* and a private matinée, to which Theodore and I personally invited three hundred guests and entertained them to tea afterwards in the spacious Palm Court.

That well-known amateur actor, Crawfurd Balcarres, produced the play and took the leading part. He and his company had to face a very critical audience on our invitation afternoon, when Lily Brayton, Lady Benson, Evelyn Laye and others well known in theatreland were present. Lord Leigh took a special interest in the production as he had been several times to Utah and congratulated all concerned on their fearless exposure of Mormonism.

I have always despised the writers of anonymous letters; there is something so cowardly in unsigned threats and insults and it was disconcerting to receive two anonymous telegrams on the first night of the performance, evidently sent by furious Mormons. These mysterious missives not only protested hotly against the play appearing, but informed me I should be shot if I allowed the curtain to rise. It was the second time in my life I had been threatened by death from a bullet and to be on the safe side we at once communicated with the police and a detective arrived quickly on the scene, to stand by in case of need and keep a sharp look out for suspicious strangers. He reassured us by saying the

Mormons probably had no idea the theatre was on an island. That in itself gave protection as any disturbers of the peace as assassins would find escape far more difficult from a building surrounded with water.

In those days there was no bridge, the small one now erected is a temporary measure as factory work of national importance has replaced the peace-time electrically illuminated tennis courts, ice rink, etc., which made the Karsino in Fred Karno's time such a delightful rendezvous before the first great war.

All those big audiences who came to see our play had to be ferried over in stout rowing-boats from the Middlesex and Surrey banks. Our detective watching out for miscreants merely got a free view of the play for his trouble and the protest threatening dire penalties ended in smoke—but not from a gun!

The Press received the play well and gave it prominence in many leading London papers, but *The Morning Post*, while praising its forcefulness as propaganda, remarked it was not easy to turn the stage into a pulpit! Other critics whose opinion held weight spoke enthusiastically of its highly dramatic qualities and in more than one notice the cryptic anonymous telegrams were given in full. I would like to quote them here, but unfortunately they were lost years ago.

We did not know when we arranged for our opening performance that it was the date of a General Election, October 29th, but polling night made no difference to the audience who completely packed that theatre in the middle of the Thames.

My favourite scene in the play depicted the secret Mormon Council chamber in which the Elders of the Church decided to "blood-atone" their erring Brother David, after hearing the report of the female spy in the pay of the Latter Day Saints. This part was admirably played by Miss Kitty Spearing, a popular favourite at amateur shows and on concert platforms.

For many years after that night the Cardinal Operatic and Dramatic Society had a long career. Many successful performances took place at Hampton Court House, on Hampton Court Green, owned at that time by the late Mr. and Mrs. Gore-Lloyd. This large mansion had a ballroom big enough to take a spacious stage with every facility for lighting and scenery, and the Club plays always concluded with a dance and lavish refreshments. A full audience was assured, for people came from all parts of Surrey as well as Middlesex, and London members motored down unfailingly to enjoy these gay Club evenings.

I have seen many changes in my home neighbourhood, but none more frequent than on the island which started that long run of plays subsequently staged in more accessible quarters. The island has gone under various names, "The Karsino" was a play on Karno's name. Later it became "Palm Beach" and an amount of yellow sand was carted there and small bathing tents erected, that bathers with vivid

imaginings might feel they were at the seaside when plunging into the tideless Thames.

Secret islands and smug little islands lie tucked away in our land where hermits and dreamers desiring some bright Isle of Rest can seek repose. But this island, well displayed in mid-stream, affords its residents a constant view of barges, pleasure steamers and craft of every kind going up and down the not too "Silent Highway." Dwellers on house-boats moored to its banks have always something fresh to look at.

Karno built himself a really magnificent houseboat, *The Astoria*, in which he entertained lavishly, and when he left it was bought by that celebrated music hall artist of Victorian days, Vesta Victoria, who is still occupying it at the time I am writing. On peace night it was such a blaze of coloured lights it seemed to suggest the colourful old days when audiences delighted in her artistry. Petite and golden haired, she lives a retired life in her river home.

Glamorous days in the island's history came when Karno's Restaurant was in full swing. Indoors and out, expensive dinners were served and the island looked like a fairy realm, lit up by electric bulbs of every hue strung round the gay building and twinkling among the trees.

To improve on the old rowing-boats which brought visitors across the stream Karno incorporated a ferry run by electricity, large enough to take motor-cars to the Island Hotel. This was considered a great acquisition and the car park was crammed with vehicles on warm summer nights, whose occupants were dining in the open or dancing in the Palm Court.

Recalling those days I feel I must tell my readers of a tragic happening.

I have mentioned before that my mother (the seventh child of a seventh child) was very psychic. She always slept at "St. Albans" with her blinds up facing two large windows above a veranda roof. At daybreak one morning, just as it was getting light and the birds were heralding the new-born day, she woke with a start to see three people, standing as she believed on the roof of the veranda, gazing in at her window. They made an astonishing group. One was a woman looking simply terrible, with her head hanging down and her clothes and hair dripping wet. Two men were supporting her, also apparently in great distress. Mother had no time to think how they could have got there, but sprang from her bed and rushed to the window, calling out: "What is it? What is the matter?"

As she approached, the three figures vanished with dream-like swiftness. She looked round and there was nothing in sight but the familiar scene, the river flowing by and the garden below. Naturally she thought she must have had a nightmare, yet those people seemed so terribly real and genuinely distressed, she could not believe it was merely a dream. She felt sure there must be something behind it, something appalling which she would learn in time.

She had not long to wait. First thing that morning we heard of a dreadful accident which had occurred just at the end of the Recreation Ground which led from our garden to the Karsino ferry. Three convivial friends, two men and a woman, had been making a night of it in those halls of pleasure. On their way back in the early hours, they boarded the ferry in their motor and the driver, by some ghastly mistake, instead of making a safe landing drove into the river where the car overturned. Both men saved themselves, but the woman inside the car was drowned. Now one of the passengers, Tommy Hamm, a well-known Brooklands motorist, dived repeatedly in an effort to force the door open. He went again and again into the water in a hopeless endeavour to rescue his friend's wife who was already dead. His picture appeared in a paper giving an account of the tragedy and Mother instantly recognized him as one of the men she had seen holding up the body by her window. This incident haunted her for quite a while and she frequently told the story when ghostly happenings were mentioned. I think she wrote an account of it in a book of authentic ghost stories long since out of print. But the tragedy did not end with the inquest or this supernatural happening. Some time afterwards we read in the paper that Tommy Hamm had committed suicide. It was stated he gave up motor racing as the result of a shock.

The Daily Express headed their account of his untimely end: "*The Ace who lost his nerve.*" It seems that the horror of that night after the island dinner resulted in poor Tommy being found dead on the floor with a gas ring turned on in the house of Lady Williams, the widow of Sir William Willoughby Williams. She told the Press that the dead man gave up his motoring career because of that ferry accident when he remained under water so long in his gallant attempts at rescue. He had never been the same since. In 1923 and 1924 he carried all before him at Brooklands.

Now why did he, his friend and the woman victim appear to my mother, who knew nothing of any of them? That is a mystery which can never be solved. I am sorry to close this brief account of the island on such a mournful note. We still visit it occasionally and take friends to the hotel for meals when rationing makes home entertaining difficult. There is no motor ferry to remind us of Mother's ghost story, but I often wonder about the sudden passing of the soul under violent circumstances, when I think of that drowning fatality.

Dr. A. J. Cronin, the provocative and clever author of *The Stars Look Down* and *The Citadel*, etc., has just written an article on death in *The Two Worlds* which impressed me very much. He gives an experience in his early years which he declares touched him like a burning brand. He was acting as medical officer in a fever hospital and took particular interest in the case of a small boy who he tried desperately to save. Late into the night he remained by the child's bedside and as the flickering

life went out Dr. Cronin was conscious of a strange spiritual experience. I will describe it in his own words:

"At the instant of his death, as he exhaled his final breath, I felt, with positive and terrifying reality, an actual sense of passage in that dim side-room. I have often heard of death compared to falling asleep, to a physical drop into oblivion. This was neither. This was a soaring transit, both mystical and real, and I, its witness, felt upon my cheek the breath of the Eternal."

Dr. Cronin goes on to tell his readers that later in life he met a famous physician, who told him that in all his years of practice he had never sat beside a deathbed without experiencing that same sensation.

The article interested me immensely, describing as it did the various reactions to religion that brilliant best-seller of famous novels went through before he came to fully believe in the power of prayer. As he carried on his practice he found it impossible not to observe certain tangible and extraordinary results achieved by the unrestrained application of belief. In the compass of his own experience he had striking indications that, as he expressed it: "the skies are not deaf to the cries of suffering mankind."

If I were asked what life has taught me, I should answer exactly as Dr. Cronin did when the same question was put to him. He said he could best convey it in one brief phrase—that life had taught him to believe in God!

CHAPTER VII

THE MOUNTEVANS GIVE A PARTY

I HAVE mentioned before my dislike of accumulation and unfortunately this has included a mania for tearing up letters. Theodore, who is so much wiser than I am, put in my hand the other day a pile he had kept from well-known people and dear friends. It was lovely to browse on them for they recalled so much that was pleasant both in the near and far past. Personality simply leaps out of letters, the expressive words, the sentiments and the writing, all indicate character to a remarkable degree. The written remarks of those who have vanished to the Invisible World often recall traits long forgotten. For instance some letters from that famous advocate, Sir Edward Marshall Hall, reminded me that he was a nature lover, despite dry as dust Law and the strain of defending clients standing on trial for their lives. I have one of his before me now, in which he says

he has been kept hard at work on a most unpleasant case at the Old Bailey which lasted twelve days and ended in useless, wasted energy.

He suggests driving over to see us from Godalming, where he was writing in the garden on a September day, when the temperature was seventy-four in the shade, after lunching on the verandah. He was palpably enjoying the songs of the birds to which he alludes with enthusiasm and adds: "I quite expect to hear the nightingale to-night, and but for the autumn haze it might be hot mid-summer. Your house must be looking too beautiful for words."

His visits to us at "St. Albans" were red letter days, I have never met a more fascinating conversationalist. He had a keen eye for the artistic. I remember him looking up at an oak carved coat of arms over our drawing-room door and murmuring: "Thank God you didn't paint it gold!"

He wrote a very small hand and some of his words were difficult to decipher, but worth the effort for it was all so part of himself. In one letter he is criticising a novel by an author whose name it would be unkind to mention. He says he has just finished this new book and declares: "What utter trash, his knowledge of women must be peculiarly unfortunate!"

I often think what knowledge of human nature a man must gain living such a spectacular life as this well-remembered K.C. with the golden voice, handsome presence and dynamic driving power with which he snatched many a victim from the gallows.

Another letter I came across was to Theodore from Sir W. Handfield Haslett, dated 14th June, 1938. Evidently we had written to congratulate him on his newly acquired title. After thanking us both he says:

"I did not expect any recognition of my prolonged but entirely undistinguished services, but as a 'kind' friend said to-day at the Bench—the honour is in time to put on my tomb!"

Well, the word undistinguished should have the first two letters removed, for he has done fine work for the Conservative cause, and the gloomy prophet re "the tomb" was a little out in his calculations, as 1946 finds Sir William still with us and as mentally alert as ever.

Bishop Welldon in another letter found to-day, dated 1937, warms my heart with its gracious words, after we paid him what we felt was a farewell visit when he was palpably failing. He died soon after that memorable day in which he entertained us to lunch at his home in Kent. We drove to "The Dell," Sevenoaks, and in thanking us for troubling to come so far to see him, he writes: "In view of our pleasantly inspiring conversation, I feel stronger, happier, and even younger than I was yesterday. Let me hope it may be your fortune in life to get as much pleasure as you give."

Such gracious words from a great mind, for Bishop Welldon was considered one of the cleverest men in England, are worth treasuring.

Both kind and cruel sentiments are well described by the poet who wrote:

"Thoughts unexpressed may sometimes fall back dead
But God Himself can't kill them when they're said."

I was talking of Hamiltons I had known in a previous chapter and I am now reminded by one of these old letters of that sparkling author, the late Cosmo Hamilton, who I omitted to mention. He is writing of a new book he has just completed, which had been held up to be looked at by an expert in libel. He says he spent three hours with this barrister making cuts and he "hopes the cuts have weakened the novel very little." I cannot quote what they concerned, or I might be in the same boat feared by Cosmo who declared you could not be too careful. He prophesied he was likely to anger the American Yellow Press, because he had gone for it without gloves and hit it right and left, so expected to be cut to bits by the reviewers. Really he might be speaking of to-day with the present wave of crime and lack of religion, for he concludes this confidential letter by saying: "My point is that the forces of evil have rushed through the chinks in the armour of light which have been made by the anti-Christ movement everywhere."

Cosmo was a devout Roman Catholic and strangely enough a spiritualist, yet did not hesitate to have long discussions on this burning subject with his Priest.

A friend who writes most descriptive letters is that prolific novelist Muriel Hine, a special favourite with women readers as she understands their problems so well. I thought she showed quite unusual consideration when writing to me from her bed where she was suffering from influenza, she put in the postscript: "Shall bake this, so as not to send you a germ!"

I have heard from many influenza victims during this present February epidemic, but none have been so thoughtful.

No one writes more poetical letters than Mrs. Hyde-Edwards, who tries to make you "feel" as well as see the places she has visited. Hot on the heels of an excursion, she sits down and paints the scene with her pen so that you may share her sensations in some recent discovery.

Springtime has brought through the post her account of a Yorkshire experience—something she describes as so incredibly beautiful that she is still wondering if she walked in a dream in fairyland. She went to Fountains Abbey to see the snowdrops and writes:

"I had no conception of the scene that would be revealed. The Abbey like a jewel in a setting of millions and millions of snowdrops in serried ranks looking like the melting drifts of the last snows of winter—acres of them, all over the banks of canals, lining the pathways, covering little hillocks and spreading away across the meadows far beyond the outer walls and gates. Magnificent blossoms too, like the kind one raises with tender care in bowls, as though they were rare and fragile plants.

I shall always remember Fountains in February as a fairy kingdom of all the snowdrops in the world!"

I would love to have shared that feast of white beauty in the sheltered valley among splashing waters, where the bare beeches do not look cold or wintry, for the copper leaves make a warm coloured carpet against a background of tall cut box hedges, rhododendron bushes and hollies.

I have a regular correspondent in Hollywood, Mrs. George Pinckard, one of those generous souls who worries over our English larders and sends lavish food parcels to cheer her friends in Britain. These welcome presents remind me of her constant hospitality when she entertained in London before the war and gathered numbers of interesting people to Hay's lodge, her Mayfair home. In her latest letter she speaks of the vital need for our two countries to stand together in this crisis in the world's history. She had written to congratulate Admiral Evans on his Peerage, for we were all delighted when "Evans of the Broke" became Lord Mountevans (of Chelsea). No one was worthier to be honoured by his King and Country than this famous sailor who has been called in the Press—"South Pole" Evans. Mr. and Mrs. George Pinckard saw a lot of him and his delightful Norwegian wife before deserting England on the outbreak of war to become American citizens. She sent me the Admiral's reply to her congratulations in which he said: "I am going to the Albert Hall for a great Anglo-American Reunion this evening and believe me, I work hard to keep Anglo-American friendship right at the top of the class." Then he continued with a little anecdote:

"Have you heard this one? An English schoolboy was asked what, in his opinion, were the three things that mattered most in the world. He replied (in order of priority), one—God, two—Love and three—Anglo-American friendship. I should have put him right at the top of the class."

It has been said: "A serene spirit is the most priceless of all possible human possessions." What I know of Mountevans leads me to believe this is one of his many possessions. He has such a calm bearing, to talk to him is a tonic, he exudes magnetism. A few days ago Theodore and I were at a most vivacious and cheery cocktail party given by him and his wife at their house in Cadogan Square and we enjoyed every moment of that visit because both host and hostess have the knack of successful entertaining. They introduce all the time, they "spread themselves" to make their guests happy, they have the pleasing knack of electrifying the atmosphere. In this beautiful house, with so much to admire, one's eye is absolutely chained to the gorgeous pictures of Norway which ornament the drawing-room. Each has its own rim of light beneath to show up the life-like scenes. Lady Mountevans told me they had belonged to her father and she is just off to visit her native land with her husband. She had numerous photographs on the piano and one of her eldest son's

baby was described by the Admiral as "my big blond grandson." Certainly a very handsome child.

Many eyes turned to Anna Neagle when she came in with husband Wilcox, wearing the very latest pale blue ostrich feather hat and a most delectable mink coat. We had not met them since they visited us some years before the last war to ask if they might copy our old linenfold panelled room for a scene in their film *Peg Woffington*. Herbert and Anna always seem to me the most perfect partners, combining marriage and business. One wonders how such busy people find time to attend parties. I did not realise she had such lovely eyes until I stood beside her, since features on the screen are so often changed by lighting and make-up. I thought what a weight must lie on the mind of that smiling vivacious woman with the full programme before her in which she will star in the new British "United Artists" movement. Three or four at least of the eight Herbert Wilcox films to be made for British Lion at the cost of about £2,000,000 will give us Anna Neagle in technicolour.

Lady Willingdon was particularly sparkling, though she had left one large piece of sparkle in her car outside. She had to go on to a big Mansion House function at which she must wear her official orders and she did not like to come in with that large well-known Indian star blazing on her breast. She had given the chauffeur special orders not to let it out of his sight for a moment. Sailors will tell you what life and gaiety she brought to the ships she visited with her husband when he was Viceroy of India, dancing with even the youngest lieutenants, who all lost their hearts to her for putting them so completely at their ease.

As the party neared its end and we had talked to many mutual friends and new acquaintances, an interesting Scotsman to whom we were introduced on arrival made an unexpected suggestion.

"Look here," he said, "I want you to come back and dine with me at fifty-five Park Lane."

It sounded tempting but I asked what his wife would think if he arrived back with two unexpected strangers?

"Oh! that's all right," he replied airily. "She is quite used to it. I am taking some other friends from here. We were twenty-five a few nights ago for dinner, but we won't be so many this evening."

We still felt rather shy of intruding on an unknown hostess, until his sister-in-law, Mrs. McCreadie, who was at the party assured us it was all right and Lady Mactaggart would be pleased to see any friends her husband brought home. At first I was merely interested in him as a fellow guest, but later more so when I learnt that our new acquaintance, Sir John A. Mactaggart, Bart., J.P. (these words faced us on the door of his flat), was a veritable master builder. He told us the Mactaggart family had built over 30,000 homes and flats and he owns to-day 11,500 flats in Glasgow, Edinburgh and London. All are let with long waiting lists. I am fascinated by buildings and am always looking critically

at every house in evcry street when driving through towns or villages. So many people never give them a glance or weigh their architectural merits. I have heard it said not one in a thousand pays any attention to the homes we see in cities, suburbs or wide stretching country. As I happen to be so sensitive to architectural surroundings I took special notice of the fine block of flats next to the Dorchester, for which Sir John was responsible. He pointed out the thickness of the walls before we mounted to a spacious flat in his private lift, which wafted us high above the busy traffic in Park Lane.

There we were received by his wife, who made us feel that our hospitable host was backed up by a warm-hearted partner in the gentle art of entertaining.

When Sir John discovered that I wrote under my maiden name of "Graham" and that my father was a member of the Montrose clan, he asked if I knew the following Highland toast:

"The Lord preserve us from—
The Greed of the Campbells,
The Ire of the Drummonds,
The Pride of the Grahams,
And the Wind of the Murrays."

The last line puzzled me until he explained the Murrays were a race of solicitors and lawyers, all great talkers. Then referring to the Grahams, he added with a twinkle in his eye: "I have never known a Montrose Graham who was not proud of the fact."

Green is one of my favourite colours. I often wear it and many of my novels have been bound in this shade which is supposed to be unlucky for Montrose Grahams, because it is said they were always shot through the green of the tartan.

After a pleasant dinner in the ground floor restaurant we returned to the flat and I left the rest of the party for a quiet talk alone in my host's study. I like to hear busy people discuss their full and active lives and Sir John, in addition to being a "Master-Builder," has always been a politician. I learnt he became in 1889 the first treasurer of the first branch of the first Labour Party under Keir Hardie and suggested the Rent Restriction Act, now copied all over the world. I felt it only fair to tell him he was talking to a staunch Conservative, but this made no difference to our friendly discussion. Later he spoke of his ancestors. The name MacTaggart means "Son of the Priest" and the family were Abbots and Barons of the Culdee (non-celibate) Lay Church of Applecross, Ross-shire, from the seventh until the fourteenth century.

Sir John has always worked in the interest of the Community and as he discussed his life I noticed how vivaciously he used those expressive hands with the long square tipped fingers which laced and interlaced

or clasped his cheeks as he conversed in his vigorous Scottish voice. For over 200 years he told me his family were lawyers and bankers and as he showed me drawers full of his plans for future work I felt it was lucky this Mactaggart reared buildings instead of tackling Law. I wondered how many homes would be added to the 11,500 in his possession when all the needed workmen are released from the Forces! He and his wife are lucky in owning a beautiful château at Monte Carlo, "La Vigie," which means "The Outlook," a suitable name, since it is built on a promontory, surrounded on three sides by the Mediterranean. This home of lovely views has been little injured except for some destruction to statuary, and it is good to hear that once again our countrymen in need of sunshine will drift back to the blue sea and sparkling coast of the dazzling Riviera.

Too long have our people been chained to blitzed localities and their sensibilities dulled by dreary outlooks! I notice in many the growing thirst for a trip abroad, a flight to pastures new or scenes lovingly remembered in the beauty spots of Europe. I thought as my host showed me the photograph of "La Vigie" in its noble setting, some day perhaps I may motor past that promontory and stopping, knock at the door of a fairy-like residence to ask if Sir John and Lady Mactaggart are at home?

CHAPTER VIII

A TRAGIC SUNDAY

IN a case at Bedfordshire Assizes the popular and witty Mr. Justice Charles gave "make-up" girls, figuratively, a slap in the face when he likened them to monkeys! After this criticism he said:

"Girls who are very nice and pretty put a lot of this stuff on their faces and look like monkeys with mouths like post office boxes."

The newspaper reporting his remark quoted a West End Beauty Specialist's views on the subject. She declared women have as much right to use aids to beauty as learned judges to use shaving cream, and added: "Why do judges wear absurd wigs?"

Now evidently Sir Ernest Bruce (otherwise known as The Hon. Mr. Justice Charles) does not consider make-up as "aids to beauty" and thinks of them merely as aids to ridicule. I do not agree with the Beauty Expert who as a hit back, calls judges' wigs "absurd." They give dignity and poise to the robed figure on the throne of Justice, they frame the face becomingly, and if a man has weak hair or is bald, it must be pleasing to find his cranium a temporary wig-block.

The informative British Press published the fact that this genial bachelor "once received 167 proposals." But the bubble was burst and the journalistic stunt received a prompt denial. Justice Charles, exonerating the 167 husband-hunting females, pronounced them "not guilty" by stating: "I am in a good job, but nobody has ever wanted to marry me."

I cannot help thinking, with all deference to His Worship's opinion, it would have been more accurate had he said: "Nobody has ever *said* they wanted to marry me!"

How can he be sure that no female pulses have quickened at his approach, no longing eyes rested admiringly on his manly form, or that no heart registered the wish: "If only he were in love with me!"

Talking of the fair sex, a description of these wily creatures was sent me the other day, of course by a man. I don't know from what source he was quoting when he wrote at the conclusion of his letter:

"I expect you have heard the following——" (as a matter of fact I had not), "Woman has been likened to a pack of cards, for it takes a Heart to woo her, a Diamond to win her, a Club to lose her and a Spade to bury her."

It won't take a spade to bury me, as I am a firm believer in cremation, which I feel should be called "Translation."

But to return to Justice Charles, he comes of a legal family for his father, The Rt. Hon. Sir Arthur Charles, was a Judge. Our Vicar at Hampton for thirty-one years, the late Rev. Edward Eber Charles, was the son and brother of these two learned men and would certainly have succeeded had he also cared to follow the legal profession. But his tastes were different, he had a calling for the Church and married happily.

Eber and his wife were our valued friends for the many years they lived at the Vicarage, about five minutes' walk from our door. Frequently they played tennis with us at "St. Albans" and were experts at the game. In the pulpit of St. Mary's Parish Church he preached sermons which clearly revealed his scholastic mind. He could dissect a subject with the precise decision and deep learning which made his near relations so famous at the Bar. His skilful analysis of religious themes was as ably presented to his congregation as if the discourse had been a point of Law.

It was not an easy matter to over-ride any policy on which he had set his heart. He knew what he wanted after deep and thoughtful deliberation and stuck to his point through thick and thin. Knowledge sifted and weighed with the utmost care and personal observation was his strong card. Versed in many of the arts, he dearly loved music and was a useful critic at choir practice. Not without a good deal of trouble did he achieve a very real addition to the church in the decorative choir stalls, which for long years to come will be a memorial to his

memory. He also sponsored the splendid screen which bears on it the names of the fallen in the first great war.

January 3rd, 1943, is a Sunday we shall never forget. As usual the congregation settled down at morning service, expecting to hear one of their Vicar's interesting sermons on some biblical subject, but for the first time I think in the whole of his career he spoke of himself. He burst on his astonished parishioners what was a veritable bombshell, telling them that in a few months he would be giving up his living and retiring from active work. He spoke of death, illustrating the passing of the soul as one door closing while another opens and reminded his hearers that some might not be there when another year dawned. It was all so simple, straightforward and feeling and such an utter surprise. I believe even his church wardens had no idea he contemplated leaving us. It is easy to imagine how people, grieved and startled, discussed the news as they came out of church.

That afternoon he enjoyed his tea of hot cakes over the Vicarage fire and then decided to take his dog for a walk. He was devoted to this dog which always accompanied the family on holiday, as it pined and refused food in their absence. One pictures him striding down the short Vicarage drive and turning towards our house on his way to Bushey Park, his favourite walk. Then a few minutes from our door this dear friend and parish priest fell dead on the pavement.

Suddenly, without a moment's warning, his spirit was wafted to higher life and an unseen world. The community who were bewailing they would probably lose him the following March, learnt they had indeed listened to a farewell sermon, the last words from the Vicar who for thirty-one years had been the outstanding figure in the parish.

The shock to Mrs. Charles and her daughter was very terrible. The latter does noble work as a Sister in one of our biggest hospitals and the son is a district commissioner in the Sudan Political Service, so was unaware of the tragedy till the news reached him by cable.

I am glad I stayed to Holy Communion after the eleven o'clock service that morning to receive those sacred rites for the last time from the hand I had clasped so often in friendship. How little I dreamed it would be stiff and cold before the sun went down!

On looking back at the hymns on that last day of his ministry it struck us as strange that we had sung hymn seventy-three (his age), and that it should deal so much with death, especially the verse beginning:

“Who of us death's awful road
In the coming year shall tread?”

I have always wished that word “awful” could be changed to “lovely” or “peaceful.” No one should think of the flight of the soul as an awful happening, cruel for those who are left, but glorious for the escaped.

mortal tasting immortality. It seems specially sad that clergymen's widows not only lose their dearest living treasure, but their home at the same time.

Hampton Church is associated in my mind with many joys and sorrows. In my young days we were bidden to the wedding of a girl friend who lived in a large house at which the reception was to be held after the marriage ceremony. Many of the guests did not know that the bridegroom had been previously married, but as the innocent party procured a divorce from his first wife. He and his fiancée were anxious to be married in church. Prebendary Ram who was then Vicar of Hampton objected, but had no right to deny them the church, so they got an elderly friend or relative to officiate at the ceremony. Father Black was at that time having a rabid campaign against such marriages. Having got wind of this big wedding, he or one of his representatives crept in the crowded church and stayed quietly in the background till the binding words were about to be said. Then in a voice which rang through the building he read his protest to the amazement of the congregation and the trembling bride and bridesmaids who looked as if they were going to faint. The officiating priest stammered that he was in his rights and would proceed with the ceremony, declaring: "I hold the Archbishop's licence." But he was so agitated he dropped it as he said the words. Evidently his hand trembled as much as the bride's bouquet and the flowers carried by her attendants.

This reminds me of a very nervous princess, who on account of her rank and position was frequently called upon to open bazaars and appear at public functions. She told a friend of ours she was so thankful when maidenhair fern went out of fashion because it generally decorated the bouquets she had to hold and the tell-tale fern gave away how her hands trembled with fear when she had to speak.

Talking of disturbances in church, my mother in her childhood heard the marriage banns forbidden and her mother said afterwards: "Be sure and always remember that, as you will probably never hear such a thing again." The clergyman reading those banns turned scarlet and said: "Please meet me in the vestry later." And there the story ended for us, but it often passes through my mind when banns are read. I always listen to hear if the bride is to get a prettier name or whether she's changing hers for a less desirable one. I sometimes wonder if I had fallen in love with a man who had a really objectionable name, whether I could have borne to be labelled with it for life? Perhaps one would get used to it in the long run.

With church matters in my mind a somewhat gruesome recollection flashes on to the screen of memory. A Hampton curate many years ago was most eager for us to inspect the old vaults below the church and said he would have them opened specially for us. Personally I was not at all anxious to descend into these chambers of the dead, but as other

members of the family seemed intrigued by the idea and the "Showman-Curate" had procured the key, I was persuaded to join the party of inspection. We met by an iron grating which lay between the outer walls of our parish church and a row of flat tombstones. The grating was removed and a ladder placed in position which led down to an ancient archway with iron thongs guarding the approach to the vaults. I am peculiarly affected by atmosphere and uncanny vibrations. The unwholesome air which filled our nostrils as we entered was the first unpleasant experience, then we gazed in surprise at the extraordinary quantity of coffins rotting and decaying. One would have expected these relics of the old burying days at least to be tidily arranged in seemly order, but no! We were amazed at their disarray, many on end and upside down. Some were split open and bones lay about. It was impressive to note that some coffins were covered in royal blue or crimson velvet with brass studded nails to ornament the lids. I was the first to escape from the party, thankful to breathe the outer air, and as I waited for the others to join me I was almost physically sick.

As I mentioned, this was long ago in our early married life, when my mother was strong and active enough to join us in that climb down the ladder. By now all may have been altered and seemingly arranged, but I have no desire ever to enter a vault again. I had an aunt who always declared in a strange church she could tell at once if there were vaults underneath.

The Curate who shepherded us into that unsavoury place frequently visited "St. Albans" and one day when coming to tea he was walking through the churchyard, a short cut from his lodgings to our house. He arrived in a breathless state and told us in a very agitated voice that he had just experienced something rather terrifying and certainly peculiar.

"On the path through the churchyard," he said, "as I was strolling along thinking of nothing in particular, I suddenly heard the strangest noises like a multitude of voices calling to me from the graves—as if they were asking me to come to them. I was so petrified with fear I took to my heels and ran as fast as I could, while the ghostly voices called after me, until I was out of earshot."

Even as he told us the story he declared they seemed ringing in his head and we gave him a stiff whisky and soda with his tea. We fancied it was attack of nerves as he was rather highly strung though perfectly well. But the strange part was, within a few weeks after his ghostly experience, this healthy young curate died quite suddenly. We could not help wondering if the voices were a warning, urging him to prepare for an unexpected departure from mortal life.

There have been stories before of whispering ghosts. I remember reading about two spooks with the voices of very old people who woke visitors in the middle of the night in a haunted house at Hindhead.

But this Hampton incident, known only to our family, was certainly unusual, occurring in the open and in broad daylight, when no one could say it was a dream.

It is odd how many believe in ghosts and yet attach so little importance to the after-life. It all links up with "Kingdom come," with "The resurrection of the body and life everlasting," since it is in the same category with Survival. I understand that anything to do with spiritualism is anathema to the B.B.C. No serious talk from a believer in something which thousands follow and hold sacred would be considered for a moment, not even if the Angel Gabriel knocked at the door and asked to be allowed to speak on the air. Yet isn't this strange? The *Daily Sketch* which I have read to-day (8th March) says nine owners or tenants of haunted houses have offered their ghosts to the B.B.C. for spook broadcasts, and Mr. S. J. de Lothbienière, Director of Outside Broadcasting, told that paper:

"I am interested in the so-called occult and as my staff gets bigger we shall make further experiments. Mind you this has nothing whatever to do with spiritualism."

Nothing to do with spiritualism!

Well, Mr. Lothbienière, I beg to differ. Ghosts *are* spirits. If you believe in ghost stories you must believe in spiritualism, which simply seeks to prove there is contact with the so-called "Dead."

I wonder if Mr. Lothbienière will ever acknowledge that if he is interested in the occult he must be interested also in spiritualism.

If there are such things as ghosts it follows as a logical conclusion there is an after-life.

CHAPTER IX

THE VISION ON THE WALL

AMONG many valued friends in the neighbourhood in which we live, not a few reside in Hampton Court Palace. The widows of famous men are offered an attractive home there by the King, and the private apartments make ideal residences. Many strangers who hurry through the picture galleries, terraces and spacious courts, think of the place only as a show building for the enjoyment of the public. They are absorbed by the classic regularity of Wren's work and as a striking contrast to the East front the Tudor architecture fascinates the eye, they only picture the past dwellers. Wolsey creating his magnificent house, the much-married Henry VIII and his tragic wives, all seem more alive to the sightseer than those families to whom the Crown has given apartments. Hidden away behind the massive walls, relatives of brave and clever

men distinguished in the service of their country, make a cosy and homely "dwelling-house" of this stately palace. I prefer to think of it as the home of many friends, than the holiday-ground of thousands of trippers. It is pleasant to know that parts of it are occupied by those whose kindred have helped to make England great and that not only the ghosts of the past occupy the many attractive rooms.

How nice to see those fine old doors intimately opened, while guests are ushered into the presence of some resident whose own atmosphere permeates the once dignified apartments of royalty or attendants on the royal household!

Theodore and I were calling recently on Lady Scott, whose quarters lead out of Tennis Court Lane. She has great charm and is often seen propelling her large electric chair through traffic with a masterly hand. On this particular day we were fortunate to find her alone, because we drew her on to talk of her late husband, General Sir Thomas Scott. Saying he was very psychic, she told us of a peculiar happening soon after he started his military career in the Irish Fusiliers. He was sitting one day alone over a fire when suddenly a vision appeared on the blank wall opposite his chair. Clearly he saw himself, pictured in the open space by the fireplace, walking up a hill and at the top of the steep incline, Lord Roberts stood with hands outstretched in welcome. On his face there was a wonderful smile which intimates of "Bobs" knew well, a smile that helped to make him so lovable and magnetic. The young subaltern was naturally amazed as he watched this clear moving picture and could not imagine what it meant. After the warm congratulatory handshake with Lord Roberts had taken place, the vision vanished as mysteriously as it had come. At a later date that happening actually occurred in real life. He went to Uganda in his military capacity and owing to his colonel being ill, young as he was he got command of the troops who were to undertake a dangerous and exciting mission. They had to hunt down a large body of rebels who were trained soldiers, a desperate crowd to tackle. For ten months he and his men during this hazardous quest practically lived on bananas and ever afterwards he hated the sight of a banana! Well, one night a great chance came. They were hot on the heels of the enemy and Tommy Scott, as he was called, heard that all the rebels' guns were stacked in a fortified compound, ready for a major battle the following day. His quick brain stood him in good stead at that zero hour. Accompanied by two of his men he planned a secret raid that night. The three managed to get into the compound and crawling in and out among the guns rendered them unusable. The following morning the mutineers discovered what had occurred and Lieutenant Scott and his men captured the lot. For this splendid piece of work he was given the D.S.O. and the thanks of Parliament for having "saved Uganda." When he went to Windsor to receive his D.S.O. from Queen Victoria, Lord Roberts came down the castle

hill to meet him with outstretched welcoming hands and the charming smile, exactly as he had appeared in that vision on the wall. Lieutenant Scott was made a Brevet-Major straight away, two ranks being passed over when he was promoted, a very unusual occurrence in those days.

Lady Scott told the story most graphically and while I listened I noticed the charming family miniatures grouped round the large fireplace. She has the knack of putting things in their right setting. Those miniatures would have been far less impressive if scattered about the room. All her husband's medals and orders are framed by Spink most pleasingly in a glass case, a gallant array to testify to a brilliant career. She was wondering if she ought to throw out the Japanese orders presented to him for escorting a Japanese general and his staff to various stations in India when they were there for the Durbar. "The Rising Sun" was a very ornamental large star. We thought it would be a pity to disturb the harmony of those framed memories.

Lady Scott is the lucky possessor of lovely old china and pictures which just suit the palace walls. Her devoted companion "Chinkey," a Pekinese, is unfortunately stone deaf. His nerves were ruined in the air raids and he hates to be left alone for a moment. Lady Scott said sadly:

"He used to be such a gallant little dog!"

She had yet another story about her psychic husband which interested us. This second strange happening occurred in Calcutta. One morning he woke in his bedroom at headquarters office, thinking his servant had come to call him and bring his cup of tea. Instead he saw his great friend Colonel — (Lady Scott could not recall the name), hurrying across the room waving a telegram. This early disturber of his sleep spoke in an agitated voice:

"I say, Tommy old chap, isn't it dreadful? My brother is dead!"

As Tommy commenced to sympathise the Colonel went hurriedly away, apparently too overcome to discuss the subject. Now here is the queer part of the story. His friend the Colonel had never come to his room at all, but when they met at breakfast he waved the telegram exactly in the same way, repeating his bad news in those identical words.

Such happenings cannot be explained, they just occur without any possible solution. I can only imagine it was a case of premonition, knowing events beforehand, like that strange moving picture which materialised on the wall. Since writing this, Lady Scott has passed into the Beyond.

I thought as I left the palace that evening how merciful it was such a gorgeous historical building had been left standing after the many raids we endured in this neighbourhood. One terrific bomb fell near the old covered-in tennis court where Henry VIII took his exercise. Many of the palace windows were broken and certain damage was done which has been repaired.

As I have already mentioned the Dowager Lady Rossmore, who lives in one of the King's residences in Home Park, but a short walk from the palace gardens, was less fortunate. For a long time the Stud House, where so many royalties have been entertained, was rendered uninhabitable. Now its plucky resident is back again on familiar ground which looks so very unfamiliar to visitors who call to welcome Lady Rossmore home. We had been there before calling on Lady Scott and it was horrifying to see the devastation. Mittie, looking as sweet and calm as ever, received us in the telephone room. She had made it comfortable with her period pieces, easy chairs and a large desk, but oh! how different from the old days! She took us into her long double drawing-room, the spacious morning-room and big dining-room, each presented a pitiable spectacle. With windows out, ceilings down and masses of smashed furniture piled up in heaps, those once stately apartments represented a scene of ruin. I was specially grieved to see the beautiful Chippendale mirrors cracked and shivered against the walls. Valuable pictures were packed face downwards and I felt glad I could not see the damage done, for remembering them in all their glory it was heart-rending. We went into the garden where the lawn had changed to a rough field. The conservatory adjoining the house, where bright geraniums once climbed the walls, was also a ruin and will probably be removed.

Mittie said: "The dairy in the yard has just collapsed in a heap. The garage is all but down too and quite unsafe, slate, gutters and roof in a chaotic condition."

I thought what a sad homecoming it was for her, but she seemed just her same bright optimistic self and as keen as ever on her favourite occupation of sawing wood in the garden.

With that characteristic touch of humour which makes her such a delightful companion she remarked:

"Someone said to me they thought the dead had a good deal the best time and no worries, but till we have tried it—it's not a certainty!"

I suppose it depends on the kind of life we have lived here whether we enjoy—or otherwise—the future existence. In old days it was quite a common occurrence for fanatical strangers to stop you in the street with the embarrassing question: "Are you saved?" I always felt it created a difficulty, because if you replied: "Yes," it made you rather like the Pharisee in the Temple who was less worthy than the humble suppliant who prayed, "Lord be merciful to me a sinner." But if you did not acknowledge you were saved, it seemed like mistrusting your Saviour. In Shane Leslie's book, *The End of a Chapter*, he tells of a man who asked the learned Mahaffy if he were saved and received a prompt "Yes!" Then the interrogator asked: "Why don't you proclaim it from the house-tops?" Mahaffy wittily replied: "Well, it was such a near squeak, I like to say nothing about it!"

Shane Leslie was having tea with us at "St. Albans" shortly after the Guards' Chapel had been wrecked by a flying bomb. He gave us a most harrowing account of how he had helped to remove the bodies. He has a particularly picturesque way of describing incidents and is an enthralling conversationalist. I have just remembered that my cousin Carrie, the late Lady Hart, also an arresting talker and never at a loss for an apt reply, was suddenly asked: "Are you saved?" by a man in a bus. Without a moment's hesitation she murmured very sweetly: "I have a humble hope." She always spoke in a musical voice and was the very essence of charm.

I often think how many interesting people there are in the world scattered among the mediocre masses and how favoured one is to meet them. I feel I have received more than my fair share of these blessings as I saunter through the flowering fields of the past and regain the perfume and stimulation of bygone days.

I was struck by the way Sir Hugh Turnbull spoke of the delights of memory when he was lunching with us recently. He seemed to like growing older.

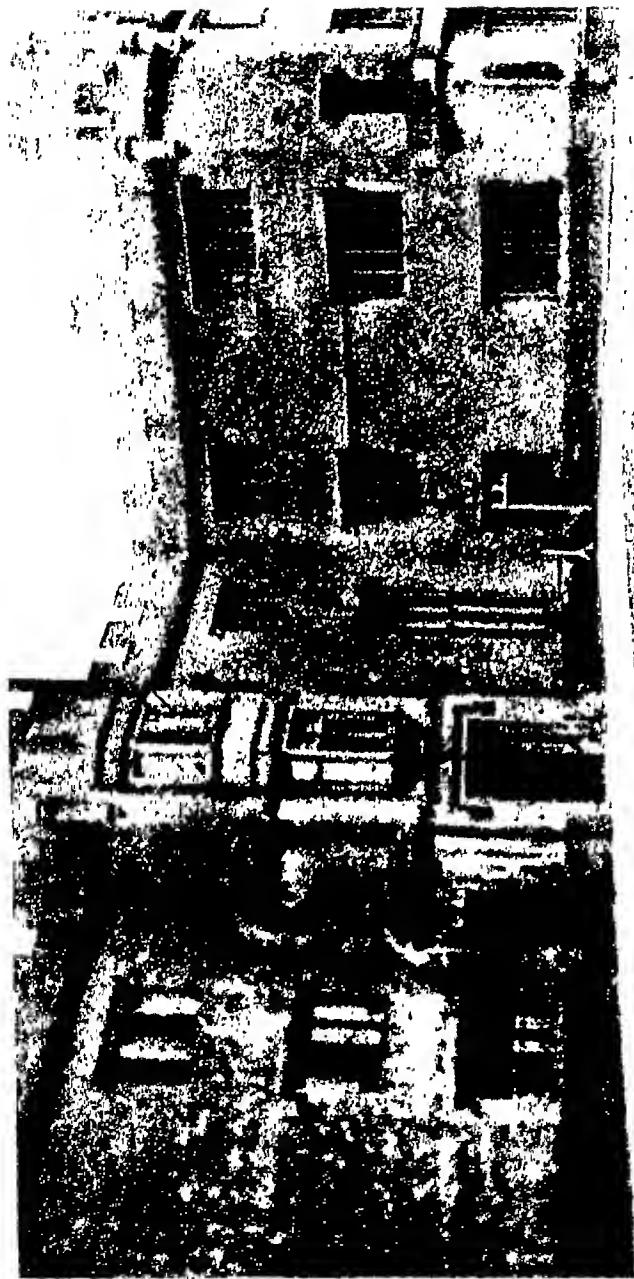
"The younger generation," he said, "cannot enjoy the pleasant recollections which flow through the mind of those who have lived a full eventful life. Memory is very kind and gilds the lily, it exaggerates the bright patches while it glosses over or dispels the shadows of the past."

His life has been packed with incidents, a glance at *Who's Who* shows what good work has been done by this tall agreeable Scotsman. A Lieut.-Colonel in the 7th Gordon Highlanders, he is a member of the King's Body Guard for Scotland. I feel chiefly interested in his connection with the Police Force which I so admire. He was Chief Constable of Argyllshire, but now holds an important post in London. On the day he visited us he had come to inspect his new horse being trained at Imber Court, where the good steeds in the Police Force learn their manners. It must take a tremendous lot of schooling to send them out shock-proof among shouting crowds or thundering guns of welcome and noise of jubilation. It is wonderful how these magnificent mounts behave on such occasions, the wild human clamour falls on their ears like water on a duck's back. Sir Hugh favours chestnut and the horse he had just visited was this colour. While acquiring the art of never being restless or nervous, this finely bred creature strongly resented the clippers. When the barber for canine smartness and beauty applied them to its sensitive skin he met trouble and apologised that the trimming up was not as good as he desired.

I have seldom met one with the energy and drive Sir Hugh must possess who gave out such restful vibrations. He has a most soothing personality, one cannot imagine him impatient or fidgety. I sensed the quiet mind and far-seeing judgment in that leader of men, the deep inner "something" we call ego, shone through his gracious personality.



THEODORE AND WINIFRED WITH TAMARA, JILL,
AND 'MR. POLLOCK'



THE COURTYARD, LLANTARNAM

He told us he used to sing in his young days and recalled an amusing incident that happened in West Ireland.

He was invited to an "at home" at the house of the banker's wife and she begged him to sing to help entertain her guests. When he arrived she asked eagerly: "Have you some songs with you?" He replied: "Yes, but I fear I have only brought some old chestnuts." "Oh!" she said, "I haven't heard that song!"

Now the fashion of asking friends to bring their music, seems as dead as the much caricatured amateur reciter. I must admit I used to enjoy recitations. I have noticed a mild revival of this talent seems indicated, but it needs to be taken in small doses. Parlour tricks have vanished with that detestable form of humour—the practical joke. Long may it remain dead, since it always produced discomfort or fear.

We live in more considerate times now and people can dress in the most ridiculous style and no one laughs at them openly or insults them in public. I can recall how street urchins guyed unfortunate female pedestrians if they held their skirts above ankle length when crossing a muddy road. In Victorian and Edwardian days a trousered woman would have run the risk of being stoned! Where eccentric clothes and peculiar habits are concerned, live and let live seems the modern maxim.

I try not to be critical or judge as I closely observe my fellow men and women. I have always disliked that: "I thought it my duty to say so!" attitude. Yes "live and let live" is my motto.

Theodore, looking over my shoulder and reading these words remarked dubiously: "And wink at corrupt practices?"

"Ah! well, that is another story, my dear," I said, as I laid down my pen. "We will leave it at that!"

CHAPTER X

GIVE PLACE TO THE PHYSICIAN

As I have mentioned in Chapter III, I never touch meat, yet I am not a vegetarian. I eat fish and eggs and nibble a bird if rationing affords this luxury. I do admire complete vegetarians and wonder if this rule of life gives them superb complexions.

Vera Davies, married to a clever architect who bears the intriguing Welsh name of "Elidir," is a strict vegetarian and has a dazzling skin. I was more than ever impressed, when she called on us recently, with the purity of it, the transparency, so clear as to be almost startling, which set off the very bright eyes in her attractive face. I fancy not a few women would gladly follow her diet if they could obtain such a beautiful result. But as a friend who met her here remarked, she would probably have

had that delectable complexion anyway, quite apart from the vegetables, fruit and yaourt, in other words sour milk, which find their way to her dinner table. Well, I wonder!

She and her husband, who shares these dietary views, have recently settled in a delightful Regency house in St. John's Wood, but we first met them when for a short time they were caravanning in the grounds of Garrick's Villa. Under the shade of old world trees and within garden's length of the Thames, it was an ideal spot for a caravan and just suited these dear people, who in some mysterious way, create around them a romantic atmosphere. They are unusual and that is why the Christian name of "Elidir" suits Mr. Davies down to the ground. It was the name of an old Welsh saint and is also a Spanish word owing to a strong Iberian connection in one period of Welsh history. The Garrick's Villa caravan was a sheltered contrast to a similar home on wheels which they occupied during the latter part of the war. Elidir's architectural work took him to Wales and finding no other home, he and his wife resorted to caravan life on the cliffs at Llantwert Major, overlooking the Severn. It was a perilous spot in which to place an unsubstantial dwelling, but the vast open spaces it overlooked appealed to these artistic and nature-loving people. From March to July they braved the elements, enjoying the view from the cliff face, until in July, of all months, the gales became terrifying and the caravan had to be hastily tethered down or it would have taken a header into the blue!

I am always interested in keen workers and love to question them on their profession. Talking to Elidir who is a member of the Ministry of town and country planning, I asked what made him take up this work as he would definitely have succeeded in many forms of art, so had a wide choice.

"Well," he said, "I chose it at the age of seventeen. I was quite unaware of the actual functions and as the activities of my calling increased, I grew to realise it is not the material work that matters but the spirit behind it and the atmosphere in which the project is conceived."

His view-point appealed to me, I hope other architects feel this way. I led him on to explain his sentiments more definitely.

"It isn't," he declared with that eager expression which makes his face alive like Vera's, "just accomplishing something for a client. I do not think in the terms of bricks and mortar, I strive to create what reflects the character and life of the people who will live therein, something that is sympathetic."

I knew what he meant. The building must harmonise with the personality of its owners, the house and its inhabitants should have a conformity of temperament. Don't tell me houses are without temperament! It oozes out of their very veins, they are alive like trees and flowers to those who look below the surface and sense the vibrations which exist in everything we touch or use.

Sensitives can without doubt feel a reciprocal influence emanating from objects that are lifeless to the spiritually blind.

Elidir thinks it is odd how many people imagine that only a woman should design a kitchen, whereas men can be just as domesticated. He confessed that knowing this female prejudice, he has occasionally got his wife to give advice to clients who would not take it from a man. Vera's suggestions, even in the heavy responsibility of town planning in which he specialises, have helped and inspired him. They are both tremendously interested in the theatre and ballet because the colour in life which this age lacks can be found through the stage.

But all this takes me a long way from Garrick's Villa where we first met and now I have something to say about the owner of this historical house.

From writing in *That Reminds Me*— of natural healers and telling my readers about the great power in this direction possessed by Mr. Squire-Tucker, I realise how deeply interested a vast number of people are in the subject. Dr. Laura McConnell, officially styled a "Psychiatrist" has this blessed gift and is a remarkable healer. I hear about many of her cures.

David Garrick's old home having been converted into flats, its owner settled down in Garrick's Lodge, a picturesque residence in the extensive grounds. Here she divides her time between seeing patients and attending to the wants of ducks and chickens; they certainly give the garden a friendly domesticated air.

Dr. McConnell claims that she has always been a "Spot-Diagnostician," which means the art of knowing what is wrong with a sick person by merely looking at the patient. She explained to me her latest methods in this mysterious line. She can discuss a new patient over the telephone, asking the Christian name; oddly enough the surname does not seem to matter. Then she proceeds to rattle off a description of the person she has never seen and to diagnose the case. The amazing part is not only to herself but to the man or woman telephoning, she frequently gets ninety-five to one hundred per cent right. Naturally she sees the patient after this strange telephone talk to corroborate what has been said and needless to add she is very psychic. At the present time she is busy experimenting with various doctors and friends and I wish her luck for I know medical science as well as psychic healing has been in her blood from childhood.

A story she tells of those early days confirms this. She calls it one of the most tragic yet comical memories of her childhood. She was going to a very smart party given by her mother's great friend, The Hon. Mrs. Doyle Penrose, at Oxhey Grange. That this little girl might look her best when dressed and ready for the grand occasion, her mother clasped round the small neck a string of beautiful amethyst beads presented to her mother by the Prince Consort at her christening.

During the party another young visitor, a girl whose eyes travelled enviously to the bluish violet of those precious stones, offered little Laura a book, a well-thumbed Red Cross Manual, cost price one shilling, and a packet of Velma Suchard chocolate, in exchange for the beautiful beads. The deal was made secretly in a corner of one of the large play rooms. No sooner were Laura's eyes fixed on those maps of the body's skeletal structures and the arterial system, than the delights of the party were forgotten. She curled herself up in one of the wide window seats of Mr. Penrose's studio and remained absorbed in the Manual, drinking in the wonders of God's creations and wondering how soon she could be a doctor!

Unhappily on her return home, though Mrs. Penrose was at once informed about the precious necklace, it was never traced. Laura did not know the name of the child who had it. The hostess was much upset by the incident and for years afterwards took a sympathetic interest in Laura's career. A book-loving child with a desire to learn and practise medicine appealed to that well-known Quaker family. The Penrose name stood for a fine Christian type of English gentry.

Dr. McConnell possesses the touching virtue of gratitude. Alluding the other day to a small service I was able to render her some years ago when her husband was dying, she said:

"Yes, you certainly helped me in the past, why should I forget? I never do forget a good deed—unpleasant ones—yes!"

What a pity everyone cannot live up to that philosophy of life, how much happier the world would be! She believes firmly, as I do, in prayer. Emerson wrote: "No man ever prayed heartily without learning something." I think many people who would not care to call themselves religious, thank God in their hearts without knowing they are doing so, when some heavenly blessing falls across their path.

It is a marvellous experience for the material minded if suddenly some unseen angel enables them to sense the realms beyond the range of physical existence.

When I was writing my novel, *A Spider Never Falls*, Dr. McConnell did me a good turn by not only "vetting" the medical part of the story, but making suggestions which greatly helped the plot. The leading character, a medical student nicknamed "Spider," is drawn as a spot-diagnostician. When his fellow-students in hospital discover his uncanny powers it naturally raises their curiosity. Secretly in working hours they make "a book" on his chances in the Out-Patients' Department and are caught in the act of betting about "Spider" spotting the right ailment. This amusing scene was one of Laura McConnell's suggestions and like others she made, was, I suspect, taken from life. We share a deep love for animals, and my hero "Spider" saves a dying dog injured in an air raid, by doing a marvellous operation on it before the Narpac man arrives.

"Spider" thus proves his skill and through this chance act of mercy shows he is a born surgeon. Later a great doctor allows him to perform the late O'Shaunessy's special operation, joining the coronary with the mesentery-omentum vessels in a coronary thrombosis case. In fiction one can make a young man get away with this kind of thing, but what a thousand pities a genius like O'Shaunessy was not kept in the hospital when war broke out! He was allowed to join the forces at the beginning of war and lost his life at Dunkirk. Those in authority who sacrificed such a valuable doctor ignored the Scriptural injunction: "Give place to the physician—for the Lord hath created him." Had that phrase from Ecclesiasticus been written to-day it might have concluded with two extra words: "and her," seeing we now have so many women doctors, to say nothing of female vets. We always send for a feminine charmer to vamp our animal family when sick. The clever lady recently attended our Tamara for jaundice, an aloof Siamese cat. Often when she is sitting very still she looks exactly like a beautiful china ornament, but then I fancy most Siamese cats look on themselves as professional beauties. Tamara's coat of lovely dun colour tones with the old oak-panelled rooms at "St. Albans." Her feet, tail, face and ears are a deep chocolate shade which throws up the paler tan. Her one love is our Hilda, the Hilda Blanchard readers of *That Reminds Me*—may remember, who was born on these premises and has a wizard power over animals. Perhaps I malign Tamara when I call her proud and aloof. That attitude may be the result of nervousness, for I often notice her eyes have the shine of fear in them. Her elongated body moves with a decided slouch. At times she seems to walk with haunted steps as if suspecting that ghosts of Siamese ancestors silently follow in her track.

Dogs I feel hold a higher position than cats. Shaw Desmond, the well-known author, thinks they eventually evolve to become human beings, but Hannen Swaffer says they don't! I dare not venture an opinion, but I should love to meet my dear departed dogs in heaven—if I get there! I have not seen a cat mentioned that I know of in *Who's Who*, though I cannot profess to have studied the whole of that vast volume. I noticed the celebrated author and sculptor, Rom Landau, gave his recreations as: "the countryside, talking to dogs—preferably cocker spaniels."

I always feel compelled when I pass a dog either taking a walk alone or seated on its doorstep, to say, "Good morning," or "Good evening." I don't think I have ever missed seeing the light of response in the dumb creature's eyes and sometimes an expression of pleasurable surprise at being greeted in a friendly tone.

Speaking of spaniels, Mrs. Hyde-Edwards recently told me she had spent an afternoon at a dog show, happily watching cocker spaniels being judged in the ring. It was a cocker show and many champions were "showing off." She said: "They certainly were beauties and of

course I wanted to walk away with the whole lot on a string! It was rather amusing studying dog-breeders' psychology. The crowing triumph and hideous jealousy and disgust on their faces, according to the place their cockers took in the judge's decision, was quite undisguised." She enjoyed it all thoroughly and was so interested she completely forgot the passage of time.

Fascinating as these shows may be, I have a penchant for the humble mongrels. They are unusually intelligent and very affectionate. I must not let our beloved miniature pom, Jill, hear me expressing this sentiment, since she is highly bred and knows exactly what we say, while her intelligence is unbounded.

Dr. Renier is reported to have said that the English are so fond of dumb animals because they are themselves practically inarticulate. If this remark were made, I should like to ask him if he has ever really known an inarticulate woman?

A good lady in court once said to the magistrate: "I wish to take out a summons against my neighbour for saying things to my dog."

She may have been ignorant, but I feel her heart was in the right place.

When the great John Ruskin lived in a lonely lake country he described certain shepherds who took their dogs to church and if the weather proved very snowy they sent these faithful animals to church on Sunday to represent them.

I fear too many people in England who never enter a church would not think of doing this even if they had willing canine representatives to show they remembered it was Sunday.

Strange how little the life of the soul is considered in these days when empty churches slight the Great Deliverer who saved us from being devoured and completely destroyed by German invaders! Ought we not to attend the services even if the preacher bores us, at least to pay our respects to the King of Kings, just as loyal citizens go to court to bow or curtsey to earthly sovereigns? I often think of our dear Queen Elizabeth's lovely speech to women on the radio when she said:

"It is on the strength of our *spiritual* life that the right re-building of our national life depends."

I think she would have smiled had she heard a woman who was joining lustily in the National Anthem adding at the top of her voice in a crowded assembly:

"God save our King and Queen!"

Doubtless many of their Majesties' subjects who looked round at the enthusiastic singer, said silently in their hearts: "God bless them both!"

CHAPTER XI

DESMOND IN SPAIN

DESMOND is a favourite name of mine, perhaps because it is associated with pleasant memories of friends, since we know three eminent literary men who bear this name: Desmond MacCarthy, Shaw Desmond and Desmond Chapman-Huston.

The first two are married, but strangely enough Major Chapman-Huston, with his exceptional charm of manner, has managed to escape the toils of matrimony. This confirmed bachelor is no woman hater, he is extremely popular with the so-called "fair sex," who cannot fail to admire this tall handsome Irishman. He has thick white hair and somehow even on a winter's day you feel he is slightly sunburnt from the pleasing tone of his skin. I like looking up my friends in *Who's Who*. Under Desmond Chapman-Huston, a long list of his life's work ends with the not surprising fact that he includes "conversation" in his list or recreations.

His countrymen are famous for "the gift of the gab" and he is not only a good talker but an able lecturer. He looked in on us after lecturing at the R.A.F. Transport Command Headquarters in Bushey Park. Of course I was eager to know the subject of his lecture, guessing it would be something original. The discourse opened a wide question for he had called it:

"Is education really necessary?"

I should like to have heard what he said to his audience, but he seemed tired after the lecture and we could hardly expect him to repeat a lot of it for our private entertainment. He dismissed the subject with just this amount of information:

"I start by expressing my views and after telling them exactly what I think should be done, I let them decide about the necessity or otherwise."

I probed a little further and came to the conclusion that Desmond's views on education are as modern as Plato's.

He excels in writing the lives of famous people and one of his most arrestive books is his *Life of Don Alfonso 13th*, written while Spain not only had a king but an English-born queen. Incidents quaint and grimly sensational occurred while that volume was in progress. Day after day he worked laboriously in the library of the royal palace and one would naturally picture him there wielding his pen with a free hand. I can imagine, as a fellow-worker in the field, nothing more annoying than what happened. He was ordered to submit his manuscript daily to one

of the king's private secretaries and this individual mercilessly mangled the copy.

Desmond must be very even tempered for he took this interference in the best possible way. He was sleeping at a near-by hotel and when he arrived in the morning to find that the greater part of what he had written the previous day was cut out, he lodged no protest. He just put it all back when he got home at night.

This life story was highly praised when Murray published it here. Now comes a somewhat significant happening which gives food for thought and certainly surprised the author. Recently, in this year of grace 1946, that book has been translated into Spanish and is now published in Spain. May this not indicate the possibility of a restoration? Desmond wonders.

The conclusion of his visit to Spain, in the spring of 1931, when every day his mind was swamped in all the details of the royal house, came with sudden and tragic swiftness. It is not every author who has a revolution staged for his last chapter. This stirring episode will always be a sad memory to Desmond who has the softest heart for all who suffer and the break up of a home is sad enough in any circumstances.

On a certain Tuesday night in April things became so serious that Alfonso was obliged to flee the country and on the following day, in the early morning, his queen followed him into exile. All night long before that dawn broke the palace had been surrounded by a howling mob. Even the firemen climbed to the roof and covered the royal arms with red bunting. Desmond's blood boiled; and it was with a heavy heart that he went to bid the queen farewell at Escorial Station.

To his anger and amazement he found that he was the only Englishman at that sad departure. The king's youngest son, the Infante Don Gonzalo, asked him in the royal waiting-room if he were the British Ambassador, as they were both so tall, over six foot two. It was a natural enough question and Desmond answered the prince bitterly:

"No, sir, I am not, but I should be, because the queen was a British princess."

To this day his eyes flash when he describes the pitiful scene, and the absence of one he felt should have rallied to the help of a defenceless woman. Desmond is very gallant and would be a comfortable companion in a tight corner—I need not explain this sentence which might be read in two ways!

People who put their lives into Desmond's hands must feel very safe, I mean of course in a literary sense. He has a finger in numerous pies and though he may not appear as the sole author of some books, he edits them and in many cases practically writes them for the notable person whose name attracts the reading public.

He had a big hand in all of the three volumes of Reminiscences of Daisy, Princess of Pless, entitled: *From my Private Diary*, and *Better*

Left Unsaid. Desmond being her cousin, she placed perfect faith in his judgment and skill as a writer. With this able relative to help her, she launched three very attractive books, which had, to the initiated, Desmond's touch throughout. Speaking of her in his quiet Irish way he said:

"Dear Daisy Pless who was always so German in England and so English in Germany!"

I remember watching her gambling at Monte Carlo many years ago, when glittering sequin dresses were the height of fashion. I could not take my eyes off this vision of loveliness. Evidently looks run in that family, for as I have already mentioned, her cousin Desmond is a fine figure of a man with his handsome features and courtly bearing. I am surprised he is still single, I should like to see him married, but he agrees with Rear-Admiral Lynes, C.B., who said to him:

"My dear Chapman-Huston, I often think it wiser like you and me to spend our declining years regretting we are not married than regretting that we are!"

I confess in my day I have been an incorrigible match-maker because I believe so firmly in double harness if you both come from the right stable. Having snaffled one of the best possible husbands, after a few escapes which make my blood run cold to remember, I look on my marriage as one of God's greatest blessings. I can never be sufficiently thankful that I met and married my kindred soul. One thing I cannot bear to see and that is a wife taking a husband's generous actions towards her—as a matter of course. I feel a wife should be continually grateful to the man who has the legal right to pet and spoil her. Love should never be taken for granted, so wives—don't forget the polite "thank you," the look of pleased surprise, which rewards your husband when he plays up to the best traditions.

As far as I can remember the marriages we have succeeded in bringing off seem on the face of it to be ideal unions. One I specially recall because Theodore congratulates himself on having thrust two people who were rather nervous of each other—into the net. They were obviously attracted, but had little chance of meeting, so we invited them to stay. He was a retired colonel and had never married. She was a great society woman and very beautiful, so he modestly felt he had no chance. On the other hand she thought because she was a widow with a family he would be put off by grown-up sons and a schoolgirl daughter. We knew instinctively these two were made for each other, so Theodore decided something drastic must be done. One Sunday afternoon he said with a rather sly smile, fearing I would disapprove:

"I got those two alone together into the drawing-room and locked the door. I told them I would not let them out until they were engaged!"

A bold move certainly on the part of a host, but it worked! When we eventually rejoined them they informed us that Theodore had won.

He took a lot of the credit to himself, but I had to make him promise never to do such a thing again.

Anyway our fair guest gave the colonel the key of her heart and for many years they enjoyed complete happiness. When he was snatched from her by death it seemed she would never be consoled. But war came and threw her in the path of a third husband. Now I hope she is as contented as when we had the chance of helping to mould her destiny in those pre-war years.

I often think considering we are really rather sentimental, especially where our own romance is concerned, how odd it seems that we entirely ignore anniversaries. We actually forgot our first wedding day anniversary and perhaps because every day was so happy we had no need to celebrate, since life was a celebration of that great event. My mother was just the reverse. She remembered dates of long ago which amazed me. She would say: "This is the date of dear Arthur's death," a brother, older than herself, who died at the age of seventeen, yet she thought of this anniversary when in her seventies. The same with sisters and other relatives, it surprised me how retentive her memory was. On happy anniversaries she frequently wrote verses of congratulation and only the other day my sister found one written in 1928. Evelyn, her eldest daughter, was just settling into a houseboat at the end of our "St. Albans" garden, and Mother told her to choose a birthday present. Evelyn said there was nothing she would like better than a telephone. Of course Mother agreed, though she evidently thought it was rather a queer mundane gift and the following poem expressed her feelings on that birthday morning:

"A funny present I must own,
This unromantic telephone.
A birthday gift no girl could choose,
But, Evelyn wanted it to use!
A nasty, neutral, noisy thing
Which makes you start at every ring—
Which *may* bring pleasant news, or not,
Sometimes it talks most awful rot.
"That number's wrong' you often cry,
'Sorry to t-r-r-ouble you,' comes reply.
I'm sure that girl won't care a bit
You had to jump from where you sit.
Well, Evelyn dear—as you appealed,
To your desire I gladly yield.
Accept it with best love. Instal it.
Please—'Angel of the Ether' call it."

Certainly long before the leisured classes had to turn and do their own housework, the insistent call to the telephone made many feel like

servants compelled to answer a bell. The word "servant" has practically vanished. It is no longer used for one who renders service. "Domestic help" is the approved expression. I knew a very amiable woman who always called her paid companion—"my comrade." She thought the former word indicated the true position rather palpably. So when she visited friends she always asked if she might bring her comrade, since she was not strong enough to go about without a companion.

Even the Church is altering its vocabulary, I frequently hear curates spoken of as "assistant priests."

Talking of the Church, one of its leading lights said sadly to us:

"Much as I hate owning it, my parish is most immoral and quite upsets me. I have never met anything like the younger generation since this last terrible war. They seem so brazen-faced, there is such a wanting of personal self-respect. This country should be profoundly more thankful to God for all He has done to save us in the day of ghastly peril and the Church has never more required men of vision, with the courage to do God's work."

Mass education without an equal amount of Christian education worried him.

"The country," he declared, "can educate her young, but unless God is in it, they are apt to grow up not only clever, but clever devils, which is of no use to this nation."

Let us hope he was taking a too pessimistic view, for certainly there are many grand young people to-day upholding the faith. At the same time one cannot help noticing that crime is on the increase where boys and girls are concerned. I think many of our words to-day help to glorify evil. Why should stealing be called "pinching something" and how the papers and the magistrates shrink from using the word "thief!"

Some boys stole a yacht and put out to sea and were only rescued after a five-days search. The Press wrote them up as "Ocean-going boys," "young adventurers," and their pictures made front page news. I saw no word censuring them for all the trouble they caused. They were certainly old enough to know that stealing the yacht which nearly brought them to their death was a criminal offence. I believe public opinion could stamp out a lot of this bravado by calling a spade a spade.

"You are a *thief*, my boy!" would be more accurate than many of the soppy comments on sin and its consequences.

So much of the crime to-day is put down to the late war. Sin is infectious. Truly it has been said, if the world is to recover from its spiritual wounds there must be a complete moral renaissance.

When David wrote the Psalms and poured out his soul in alternate praise and abuse, I fancy he felt very like the thinking man of to-day, especially the God-fearing one.

In that anthology of sacred poetry, stretching over a thousand years, there are verses which express our recent experiences. When we

remember the preparations against invasion can we not say: "Thou hast mightily delivered thy people." We recall the air raids: "the voice of thy thunder was heard round about; the lightnings shone upon the ground; the earth was moved and shook withal." We read of the war criminals and realise that God in his indignation: "Cast upon them the furiousness of his wrath, anger, displeasure and trouble: and sent evil angels among them." Famished Europe crying for bread: "For the voice of my groaning my bones will scarce cleave to my flesh." So one could go on linking line upon line with modern events.

It is remarkable to know in this unbelieving age that the Bible is still the best-seller in the world. There is nothing to touch it in literary value. It exercises a direct influence on writers too numerous to catalogue. Take for example Dante's *Paradiso*, Milton's *Paradise Lost* and the prophetic books of William Blake. Ezekiel's fantastic visions had a powerful influence on these immortal creations, Ezekiel the mystic, as he has been called. Personally I adore *Ecclesiastes*, that work of an unknown author with its host of wise sayings. I recall the writer's words that: "to everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under the sun."

Now it is not my purpose to attempt a treatise on the Scriptures. I think I had better close this chapter and not let myself "go" on this great spiritual inheritance. I might suddenly forget I was writing about friends and personal observations to-day connected with life as I see it and have lived it. I don't know why my mind turned suddenly to the Bible's lyrical treasures, vivid narratives and marvellous happenings. They came like angels unawares to my Storehouse, perhaps because it is Lent and the shadow of Holy Week approaches. I always feel a strong strain of sympathy with the old heathen woman who was told for the first time all the heartrending details of our Lord's Passion and the Story of the Cross. She looked up with tears in her eyes and said in a choking voice:

"Oh! let us hope that it didn't happen."

But when she heard of the Resurrection morning—she dried those tears.

CHAPTER XII

ONE OF THE MOST EXTRAORDINARY MEN OF HIS AGE

APRIL 3RD, 1946, was the hottest day April has had for ninety years. This phenomenal weather drew crowds of trippers into the sunny suburbs round London.

We motored through Bushey Park, where the Chestnut Avenue was surprisingly in leaf, to keep a tea engagement at the Old Palace on Richmond Green. As we crossed the bridge over the Thames in the blazing sunlight, we met a seething mass of people, old and young, sucking ice-cream cones. As they strolled towards the river or up the hill to see that famous view, one felt it must be a midsummer afternoon. Truly our English climate knows how to give us surprises! Two days later we were shivering with cold.

When I visit Richmond I always think of my old friend the novelist, "Miss Braddon" and her delightful parties at Lichfield House, once a Bishop's Palace, now alas! demolished to give place to a block of modern flats.

We were visiting Muriel Maxwell that day, a daughter-in-law of the great writer who in private life was Mrs. Maxwell.

Only a minor portion of old Richmond Palace remains, but it is a lovely monument to the days when Queen Elizabeth died there. These historic surroundings exactly suited the personality of our pretty hostess. Behind the mellow red walls a division separates her part of the building from Lady Jersey's, without interfering in any way with the harmony of the scene. From outside it looks like one noble residence and Mrs. Maxwell shares a mutual garden with Lady Jersey, because a partition spoilt the beauty of the lawn.

I enjoyed every minute in that restful atmosphere. Each room, a dream of beauty, testifies to the taste of its occupant. Our hostess told us her bedroom, which I particularly admired, was called "the haunted room," but evidently no vibratory disturbances affect her calm temperament. Time's gentle hand had, I felt, swept from that royal house any unpleasant spiritual nostalgia which might have clung to its tragic walls, after a great English queen, torn by deep regrets, passed away there in mortal agony.

History and literature seemed surrounding us on that unusually brilliant spring afternoon. When we had enjoyed Mrs. Maxwell's delicious tea and talked with her guests, we were due to call on a famous author who lives in Richmond.

An attractive girl, writing up well-known people in *The Richmond and Twickenham Times*, Miss Wrenne Jarman, introduced us to Dr. Montague Summers, one of Richmond's most celebrated residents so far as literary fame is concerned. His full list of Christian names in *Who's Who* intrigued me when she suggested bringing him to call on us at "St. Albans" and his unusual personality quite took my breath away as he entered our old oak-panelled room. The Rev. Alphonsus Joseph-Mary Augustus Montague Summers, M.A., might have stepped out of some striking picture. On learning his favourite recreation was visiting unknown monasteries in Italy, I could imagine this venerable figure would impress the monks throwing wide their doors to receive him.

There is something in his courtly manner and picturesque appearance which suggests the supernatural. Garbed in a soutane with his feet shod in Louis XIV buckled shoes, he must have created a flutter in the trolley bus which brought him to our door. The passengers would wonder what his long black raiment indicated, with its circular cape. A fringe of soft crimped hair reaches nearly to his shoulders, while his broad brow testifies to unmistakable intellectuality.

To visit him in his home surroundings was a pleasant experience, for in his quiet study one imbibed an atmosphere which only a rare character can create. Miss Jarman truly declared when writing of him that his library, stacked with medieval manuscripts, publications from private presses, unique first editions of Gothic novels, etc., was enough to make a bibliophile's mouth water.

"Oh! yes," he said, as I exclaimed at the wide range of volumes lining his walls, "I have all sorts of funny things here. Some of these books are so rare they are not even to be found in the British Museum."

Having come from Mrs. Maxwell's home it was interesting to find he had a notable collection of her late mother-in-law's novels. The "Miss Braddon" shelves seemed to fit in with our happy little pilgrimage. I relaxed in a comfortable armchair and listened while Dr. Summers talked of his Oxford days. Dean Inge taught him Latin and many notable classical scholars, who were his personal friends, influenced his taste in literature. Theodore and his brother Robert, who came with us, were both at Clare College, Cambridge, so it was natural these three men should exchange ideas on their rival Universities. I was glad to sit silently and study the forceful personality of our host, well known as a connoisseur of the occult.

I wanted to sense the vibrations in the room where he worked, since his pen has brought to life every form of creepy horror. Ghosts and ghouls, vampires and other diabolical beings troop through his blood-curdling pages which are not mere fiction. He knows Black Magic is practised to this day. He wrote his *History of Witchcraft and Demonology* with full knowledge of the subject. No one could have portrayed those historical details with greater conviction. Materialists prefer to treat as fiction the many hair-raising stories in his ghostly books, but this devout Catholic priest, who shows up unholy forces and diabolical influences in the world to-day, realises these things are not mere illusion. Fearlessly he has set himself to expose Satan worship, necromancy and all the degraded rites of sorcery. In volumes that dive down to the depths of hell, he shows us a whole galaxy of evil drawn from the devil's cauldron which throws its slime on our sin-ridden earth. The black arts and the ceremonial worship of evil exist in our midst to-day. Here in England where Christianity is professed, there are still groups of people secretly indulging the vile practice of the Black Mass. This form of devil worship is a complete travesty or reversal of the Sacraments of the Church. Every sacred rite

is profaned and replaced by obscene parodies. The twisted cross of the Nazis, originally a pagan symbol of the sun, but borrowed later by Satanists to mock at the Cross of Christ, clearly revealed the trend of the occult studies to which the late German leaders were known to devote themselves. They played with hell fire and faced their hell on earth when tried for their despicable lives as war criminals at Nuremberg.

I realised as I watched Dr. Summers surrounded by his book-lined walls and personal treasures, that the study of the occult was only one of many subjects this versatile man had tackled. With peculiar vigour he set himself to revive old plays and after founding the Phoenix Society for this purpose, twenty-one successful productions were cordially welcomed during his directorship. The theatre as well as the reading public owe him a debt of gratitude for much intellectual entertainment. Miss Jarman's article headed "Silhouette" well described him as "an expert on the Gothic novel, the critic of Restoration drama and the editor of Dryden in six weighty volumes." Yet as I sat in that chamber of learning dominated by its genial figure in the black soutane, my imagination centred on the creepy things his genius brings to life. Werewolves, witches, warlocks and vampires seemed to peep at me from the book-shelves, momentarily eclipsing Dr. Summers' other gifts. Small wonder, owing to his knowledge and deep study, he is convinced our country should have a law against witchcraft. I believe in those dreamy moments I half expected to see, entering at the window, a visitor on a broomstick. Instead a cheerful voice announced: "You must have a glass of wine with me before you go."

Theodore and Robert did not refuse and suddenly the mystic atmosphere was replaced by the chink of glasses as the three men imbibed a wine which we learnt was called "Constantia." It was a delicious Italian brand of soft invigorating golden liquid as pretty to look at as it was agreeable to taste. Though a new beverage to us our host explained it was old enough to be mentioned in Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*. That classic among novels, published in three volumes in the year 1811, but written at least twelve years earlier, shows that the authoress had a good opinion of the wine so kindly provided as a stimulant for our homeward journey.

"What did she say about it?" I asked.

"I'll look up the quotation and send it to you," Dr. Summers replied, with his quick readiness to supply information.

True to his word the following day I received a letter from him in which he quoted the Constantia passages from Jane Austen's masterpiece:

"Elinor and Marianne, you will remember," he wrote (I didn't remember!), "are staying in London with the rather vulgar but immensely rich good-hearted Mrs. Jennings. Marianne, who has been cruelly jilted by Willoughby, is completely broken down and Mrs. Jennings is all sympathy and consolation.

"Mrs. Jennings appeared, 'with a wine-glass, full of something, in her hand.'

"'My dear,' said she, entering, 'I have just recollect that I have some of the finest old Constantia wine in the house that ever was tasted, so I have brought a glass of it for your sister. My poor husband! how fond he was of it! Whenever he had a touch of his old cholicky gout, he said it did him more good than anything else in the world. Do take it to your sister.'

"'Dear Ma'am,' replied Elinor, smiling at the difference of the complaints for which it was recommended, 'how good you are! But I have just left Marianne in bed, and, I hope, almost asleep; and as I think nothing will be so much service to her as rest, if you will give me leave, I will drink the wine myself!'"

Oh! the quiet humour of Elinor's suggestion, I laughed aloud as I read these subtle words. The quotation continued:

"Mrs. Jennings, although regretting that she had not been five minutes earlier, was satisfied with the compromise; and Elinor, as she swallowed the chief of it, reflected that, though its good effects on a cholicky gout were, at present, of little importance to her, its healing powers on a disappointed heart might be as reasonably tried on herself as on her sister."

I did think it kind of a busy man like Dr. Summers to copy out in his distinguished handwriting that amusing episode which had escaped my memory. I have never seen handwriting like his, it reflects his picturesque personality. The straight lines in darkest ink are perfectly readable despite the fact every S is a long one as in old manuscripts. At first it might puzzle a stranger, but you soon get used to it and this was not the only kind letter I had received from my new friend, but I will allude to that later. Let me finish about Jane Austen. The quotation regarding the delicious wine to which my menfolk had been introduced, appears in Volume II, Chapter VIII, of *Sense and Sensibility*, and my kind correspondent continued:

"A dictionary says that Constantia is an 'old Cape wine,' which may be the case. At any rate it seems to have been well known in England during the eighteenth century. In Italy we drank a wine we called 'Constantia.' I do not know whence the wine came—from what country—which we tasted yesterday, but it is of the Constantia family, although I fear not comparable to 'the finest old Constantia wine that ever was tasted' which Mr. Jennings drank as a cure for his gout. Surely, rather unwisely? For it is a rich wine."

So ended this informative letter and I can vouch for the richness and purity of the wine because I took a sip out of Theodore's glass.

The first letter I received from Dr. Summers kindly told me he had read my autobiography with the greatest interest and all the more so perhaps since he knew, or at any rate had met, many of those people



LADY SEGRAVE



THE DINING HALL, 'ST. ALBANS'

of whom I spoke in *That Reminds Me*—. I mentioned in one chapter how certain persons sap one's vitality and that I, being receptive to influences, fell an easy prey to this type of unconscious and often well-meaning bloodsucker. I confessed they could drain everything out of me and seriously affect my nervous system. This astute priest knew exactly what I meant. He declared, when alluding to my remarks which some readers might have thought fantastic:

"I used to call these persons 'psychic vampires.' The phenomenon is very well known to me. Often they are excellent good souls, but they do (often unconsciously and unwittingly) drain and exhaust the mental vitality of their companions. They are not bores, as you clearly point out. I know a man, a witty and clever individual, kindly and good, who is one of these folk. After a visit from him I have literally had to go to bed and rest. He has not the slightest idea of this. I have known these vampires for years and many times have I heard this problem discussed. I do not think there is a 'scientific' explanation, but there is a psychological explanation. Merely they are psychic vampires. There are also far more terrible beings, men and women who deliberately tap the life-stream of others and feed their own vitality by preying on others. This borders on witchcraft."

So spake the great authority on witches, whom Sir John Squire called: "One of the most extraordinary men of his age." I felt flattered that one whose literary work has been so highly praised by our greatest critics (the late Lord Balfour was among them), should trouble to write kind things to me about my Memoirs. In that same letter he alluded to a sweet spot I had mentioned in which Theodore and I spent a holiday, calling it rightly: "exquisite Taormina." He said what has been often in our thoughts: "Were those past days all a beautiful dream? A dream to be realised (once more) in the future." I had called it "a dream place like a jewel dropped on the mountainside glowing with colour and unforgettable beauty." How I should love to walk its delicate paths in company with an enthusiast like Sir John's "extraordinary man," for I can imagine jewels of rare expression would fall from Dr. Summers' lips. War may have marred its face, but no bombing planes could destroy the rich views of Mount Etna seen from Taormina's terraces and gardens.

Naturally a man of talent like the Rev. Montague Summers is very observant, and when he first entered our hall at "St. Albans" his eye was immediately drawn to a large wooden bust of a famous Bishop, "H. Amandus."

The beautifully carved mitre which crowns his curly hair and the ecclesiastical garments draping his shoulders are faded gold and crimson. His complexion is swarthy and he has a dark beard and moustache, a cross reposes on his breast. The eyes are slightly raised under heavy lids and the parted lips look as if he were about to speak. The bust stands on a high Queen Anne marqueterie bureau and seems to dominate

the room. We bought Amandus as an artistic addition to our home, feeling his impressive image would dovetail harmoniously into the surroundings. Not being members of the Church of Rome, I fear as Protestants we hadn't shown this work of art the reverence our priestly visitor felt it deserved.

"Do you know," he said, "that is most lucky, you must never, never part with it!"

"Oh, dear!" I replied, "we nearly gave it to a friend on his coming of age, because we felt it would suit the lovely castle he had inherited."

Dr. Summers seemed horrified that we could have contemplated parting with such a treasure. We were told when we bought the bust that Amandus, Apostle of Flanders, established Christianity in Belgium, built many monasteries, particularly round Ghent, and died at the age of ninety.

Dr. Summers supplied some more information, telling us he was sometime Bishop of Ghent. Afterwards his See was Maastricht or according to some chronicles Utrecht. He was a Benedictine Monk.

I felt my interest growing. Often I have gazed at the carved face so sombre and impressive, wishing it could tell me its past history dating back to A.D. 649.

Dr. Summers said: "Next year on his Feast Day, 6th February, you must give him flowers and a candle."

I shall certainly try to remember, if I am still in the land of the living.

That lighted candle and those blossoms in honour of a saintly bishop will also bring to mind Dr. Montague Summers' first visit and I hope by that time he will have become our "own familiar friend."

CHAPTER XIII

AN APOLOGY

I WONDER if any of my readers have met Miss M. Aumonier, perhaps not in the flesh but in volumes of inspirational poetry, for there her love of nature glows and burns as if catching the beauty of a sunset or a star. She is twice blessed because the fairies at her birth gave her a dual talent, making her artist as well as poetess. Some envious people might say it was hardly fair that pen and brush should be united in this way, but I think it is lovely when the gods endow one who lives to express beauty, with the power of appealing to the eye as well as the ear. In lyrical expression Miss Aumonier brings to life the sweetness of English gardens, the purity and message of flowers and the joyful bird songs without which no garden is complete. Then she takes up her brush and paints:

Gardens in Sun and Shade (this is the title of one of her books in its sixteenth impression). Another volume displays woodland scenes, a perky bright-eyed nightingale on a bough, white doves on a green lawn and sketches of delightful houses. Her own attractive residence in Hampstead Garden Suburb adorns the cover of her book of verse entitled, *The Poetry of Gardens*. Every line reveals a sensitive and receptive nature, one that could be easily hurt by any unkind action.

When I was writing *That Reminds Me*—I happened to be looking through some of my dear mother's belongings. She passed into the fulness of life in 1938. She loved to fill copybooks with her favourite quotations or verses and I found some lines she had taken from a Christmas card, evidently with warm appreciation of their beauty. Under the heading *My Old World Creed*, some stirring words exactly expressed my view of life.

"I will close my Autobiography on this inspiring note," I thought, "because Mother and I shared these same sentiments."

I had no idea a modern poetess had written those affirmations, declaring belief in all things beautiful. Each line commenced: "I believe—" and went on to state what was the highest and best in music, books, nature, laughter, love and reverence, ending with the sentence I felt made such a fitting conclusion to the history of my life:

"I believe in God."

It was a shock to discover I had no right to use that lovely little litany and that in quoting it I was infringing Miss M. Aumonier's copyright!

When I learnt what I had done and saw the Creed in her book, *The Garden of the Nightingale*, with its fascinating coloured illustrations by the author, I at once apologised most penitently. Now I am glad to have an opportunity of expressing my regret in print for the unfortunate mistake. Miss M. Aumonier has kindly forgiven me and I sincerely hope she may write many more "Creeds" for our edification.

In a copy of *The Queen* newspaper I came across, I found an article on her work, warmly praising both her water-colour sketches and poems. In this account of her talents I was intrigued to learn that she had painted the garden at Burnham Abbey, because that garden belongs to an Enclosed Order and outsiders are never admitted. The nuns however were so charmed by pictures they had seen of hers that they broke their rule and allowed the artist entry to the "Garden of Our Lady"—a garden 700 years old. A thousand year old wall surrounds the Madonna holding in her arms little Jesus. I wonder if Miss Aumonier, painting that peaceful scene, felt any psychic influence in an atmosphere impregnated by sanctity and seclusion.

Thinking of the gardens which come to life through the genius of

this picturesque and fragile author, I am reminded of words by H. D. Thoreau:

"While men cultivate flowers below, God cultivates flowers above; He takes charge of the pastures of Heaven. Is not the rainbow a faint vision of God's face?"

Painters like Miss Aumonier borrow the rainbow's beautiful colours and people who create beauty and write sweet poems must be very happy, because their minds are treasure houses of precious and restful thoughts. Ruskin describes them as: "houses built without hands for our souls to live in." The smallest flower in a rocky cleft can speak to us of God. Nature is such a healer. "Glut thy sorrow on a morning rose" is Keats's advice to the melancholy. All the great poets bask in "the balm and the blossoming" of spring and summer, they hear the leaves laugh and find the world sweet because the skylark is singing in the blue. It is grand to be a poet and capture nature's lessons at every season of the year.

The delicacy of the finest human work in silver or ivory is not as lovely in their eyes as the delicate tracery of hoar frost on a landscape which appeals to the truly poetical chiefly because of its transitory beauty.

One could continue tracing the joys of those fortunate individuals who on canvas or printed page catch the true message of a flower, a tree, a shadow. A rainbow, sunrise, or star can nourish their souls just as the rarest food delights a gourmand. Talented Miss Aumonier looks as if she lived on a diet of honey and early morning dew. She was born with the artistic temperament, to paint and write is in her blood and from earliest childhood she invented rhymes. She loves her work as I love mine. If I had her gift and could illustrate what I write, I should indeed consider myself a favoured mortal. It is refreshing to learn how the little things in life delight her: "A sunbeam on a blade of grass, a dewdrop in the heart of a flower, a daisy with a rosy frill."

To all who have a poet's vision such things represent God's anointing of His gifts to man. So let us reverence the sunbeams and the dewdrops on the flowers. I thank Miss Aumonier for bringing so many tender thoughts to life in her lovely little books: *The Garden of the Nightingale*, *The Poetry of Gardens*, *Gardens in Sun and Shade*, etc. These gems fill the mind with music. Her garden I know is "full of sweet singing," because those words come in a poem of hers headed *Easter*, in which she has caught the true spirit of spring.

It is Holy Week as I write and the shadow of Good Friday looms upon us, that sacred holiday when thousands will be making merry, thinking of nothing but excursions by road or water, games and other amusements.

"Is it nothing to you all ye that pass by?"

Nothing, absolutely nothing to millions who crowd the railways and thoroughfares. Yet there are the faithful who kneel for a while in the quiet of a town or country church and think of "the agony and bloody sweat."

In my young days I always attended the three hours' service from twelve to three with my parents in Hampton Church. Many members of the congregation came and went during the frequent hymns, but we always stayed the whole time. I cannot imagine what my father and mother would have thought if I had suggested breaking the vigil, which I fear I have done in later years. The vicar at that time, a most beloved friend of ours, the Rev. Prebendary Ram, was adored by the parish and a thorough father to the poor. He could afford to be generous and I believe expended his entire stipend on local charities. At that three hours' service his addresses on the seven sayings from the cross were vividly painful. He always dwelt on the physical suffering of crucifixion in a way which tore my heart-strings. His Irish temperament enabled him to work on sensitive natures like a musician bringing out the deepest harmonies of an oratorio. So carried away was he, that frequently when the church clock struck three he forgot the time and continued the service for a further twenty minutes longer. Even my father, who seldom criticised, thought this a mistake. I often think if I feel weary during a long sermon of those sad words: "Can ye not watch with me one hour?"

But Good Friday leads to the most joyful of all our Church Festivals and so I turn to Miss Aumonier's poem, *Easter*. In lyrical language she details how the Easter Resurrection is complete in "scent and blossom time," in "The music of leaves . . . soft pink buds and every young and happy thing." They arrive—"with a rush of joy to gladden the heart of the world."

I am glad she knows I never meant to offend or injure her, I like to feel she has no hard thoughts of me in her garden "full of sweet singing—"

Those are her words again and at this peaceful Eastertide may we all who listen to nature's song, catch in every breeze and breath from tree or flower an echo of the oft-repeated, *Alleluia*.

That joyful exclamation used in songs of praise to God, rings through our Easter hymns with impassioned repetition:

"**ALLELUIA! ALLELUIA! ALLELUIA!**
The strife is o'er, the battle done;
Now is the Victor's triumph won;
O let the song of praise be sung,
Alleluia!"

So I close my chapter on a gentle poetess and her garden songs. The note of the nightingale is transcended by the triumphant chant of angels and archangels and all the company of Heaven, swelling the joyful Easter strain:

"**ALLELUIA!"**

CHAPTER XIV

THE GHOST OF SEGRAVE

ONE of my heroes in the Unseen World is the never-to-be-forgotten Henry Segrave of motoring fame. Knowing that the spirit lives, and realising how through years of apparent separation he and his wife have been closer together than they could ever have been on earth, I was specially struck by a newspaper cutting she showed me, headed: "The Ghost of Segrave." It spoke of the late Sir Henry Segrave's popularity in Italy and then related this curious story concerning him. I wish I knew who was responsible for the paragraph or in which paper it appeared. The writer commenced his anecdote by saying, although Sir Henry never raced on Lake Garda, many of the local inhabitants believe on still moonlight nights he speeds over the waters of the lake. I will quote the writer's words in their intimate sincerity:

"The other evening a friend of mine was standing on the shore when an extra large wave broke and a boatman startled him by saying: 'E Enrico Segrave cogliocchi azzurri che passa.' ("It is blue-eyed Henry Segrave who goes by.") For many Italians Sir Henry is the embodiment of all knightly virtues and has become the Jason of new mythology."

My homage to the simple seafaring folk who were soulful enough to feel the spirit of a great Englishman speaking to their hearts from the crest of a wave! I am glad that record has been preserved down the chain of years in which no link of memory can be broken.

When the ill-fated boat in which he met his death on Lake Windermere had been reconditioned, it went to Lake Garda for trials. On the first anniversary of the tragedy the mechanics who loved him so well, had the boat specially cleaned to look spick and span and laid a laurel wreath on her. All the Italian officials in the district came to the boat-house to salute her. By midday she was entirely covered with flowers, the loveliest floral tributes and laurel wreaths testifying to the reverent admiration felt by the community for this notable sportsman. British and Italian flags were flown half-mast for a week.

I have talked so much to his wife Doris about him that I seem to know him in spirit better than if I had been privileged to meet him in the flesh. Doris and I met some years after the tragedy of his passing and in his lifetime I feel she wouldn't have told me so much of his character and their happiness together. In all probability we should not have become such close friends, for there is a spiritual tie between us. We both believe it is possible to communicate with the unseen world; but

for this source of comfort I dare not think how she would have borne the shock of witnessing that fatal accident at Windermere.

People in bereavement often say that life without their dear one has no meaning or reality. Suddenly the world seems external to all thought and for a time they are too numbed to receive comfort. Lady Segrave set an example of courage and simple faith that was worthy of the one she lost. This National Hero's wife can best be described as:

"Great in her heart and lovely in her ways,
And in her mind replete with beauteous things."

It is good to have a friend whose presence inspires one with a sense of refreshment. No one can be with Doris without feeling better for the quiet wave-lengths which seem to radiate from her personality. I have never known anyone quite so calm. But I must check my pen for she is no lover of praise. Perhaps she thinks I am too observant, too fond of reading the mind, too eager to probe beneath the surface.

I try to curb my curiosity, but I confess I am curious, not I hope about worldly matters which affect my friends. It may be my habit of observation is over-developed, though I never cultivated it consciously. It is part of my mental make-up to gather knowledge of my fellow-creatures in regard to character, thought, emotions, etc. It has been said that acute observation is one of the secrets of success, perhaps without it I should never have written novels.

Life is much more fascinating if the crowds in a public vehicle, on the thoroughfare, or at a railway station, appear as personalities to waken interest. Face, voice, manner, dress, in fact everything about the men and women I watch quickens psychological insight, until it becomes second nature to notice each detail. I always try to see the best in those who cross my path, vaguely hoping they may return the compliment. Oddly enough, just as I was writing these words a letter arrived from that nice Major Chapman-Huston of whom I wrote in my chapter entitled: "Desmond in Spain." He had just read my autobiography and as he writes such notable biographies, I hoped he had not imbibed my memoirs in too critical a spirit. I was relieved when he kindly called it "delightful reading, flowing along from incident to incident as gently flows the Thames." In regard to my having this moment written that I try only to see the good in my fellow-creatures, it is comforting (and I must say flattering) to follow the further remarks in his letter, which I shall quote, in fear and trembling lest I be thought conceited! This dear man says:

"You have the golden heart that sees always the best in people and in things and you make us all like life and our crotchety fellow-humans better than we ever did before—yes, and see them more truly than we ever did before. Bless you!"

I treasure that blessing and those words and must endeavour to live up to them, for surely it does make existence sweeter if we are blind to the faults in others, remembering only the beam in our own eye.

My many failures shall be left unmentioned here because this book is not a Confession Album, or it might swell to disproportionate lengths.

I have good reason to treasure Desmond's approval, since he is an authority on the printed word, being literary adviser to *The Quarterly Review*. It is a very important post and I feel proud that my friend is associated with the oldest and most famous journal in the world. One may not tell a woman's age, but in a published production the greater the age the greater the glory. This literary "child" of the oldest and justly famous publishers, the House of Murray, was born into the land of letters 142 years ago. Long may Desmond live to proffer his advice to this valuable Review which somehow always seems to me part of England. So worth while, especially if you contrast it with the new shoots which spring up almost daily. Too much food for babes, too much meaningless fare has surfeited the bookstalls. Life is such a rush that many modern readers merely ask for something light, they prefer to skim over shallow waters and are out of their depth in the stronger currents of really fine literature.

La Bruyère complained two hundred years ago, when starting his study of mankind, that everything had been said already, during the seven thousand years of human thought.

This seems to me a foolish statement. Not half has been said (or ever will be in this changing world) about our human race. What would La Bruyère have thought of twentieth-century inventions?

Surely the charm of walking this earth lies in the fact that every day is a surprise-packet, every hour one of discovery. Perhaps the greatest stimulation of all is discovering ourselves. With an effort of will power everybody can enjoy the zest of life; but naturally we must hold the right thought. Pleasures do not fall into our laps with any reassuring regularity, often we have to hunt for our treasures and unearth our joys from unexpected hiding places.

I think there is a song about the best things in life being free. This is only too true for those who revel in the festival of nature and the pageant of the seasons. The lack of restraint in wind, rain, summer sunshine and winter fury is so thrillingly set to one great orchestra of emotional music. I look back with reverence on the dance of the years as memory repeats the unforgettable incidents of the past.

Do certain tunes ring in your head at times? They do in mine and in much the same way life rings its melodies into the heart. That general picture of our journey from birth with its high lights and dark spots enables each one of us to play a solo part in the great orchestra of the universe.

To-day (23rd April) is St. George's Day. Theodore and I enjoy our *Daily Sketch* and this morning we were much impressed by a leading article in that paper by Arthur Bryant. Graphically he dwelt on the charm and meaning of the old banner of England, a red cross on a white ground, flying from the grey churches and over the green fields of our native land. We used to go to charming parties at his parents' romantic residence "The Pavilion," Hampton Court. Their presence added to the glamour of that historical house, which though belonging to the palace, stands in its own grounds. Sir Francis Bryant held many important posts in the royal household before he retired to the sylvan surroundings of a palace garden by the river. He was a very learned man and passed his brains on to his son Arthur, whose historical works are so well known. This brilliant son of a brilliant father has the journalistic knack fully developed and is not too high brow to turn from writing historical novels in order to enrich the daily Press.

With his mind nursed in English history the flag flown to-day seemed to him the most beautiful sight in the world, that flag under which King Harry conquered at Agincourt, Drake at Gravelines, and Marlborough at Blenheim.

His trenchant words on the courage of England read inspiringly, especially when one thinks of the overwhelming perils from which she has been snatched, "something of a miracle," as he remarks, "in the eyes of watching mankind."

As I looked up at that flag waving so proudly in the morning air I felt the truth of Arthur Bryant's words.

"The flag of St. George should be a terrible sight to would-be world-conquerors, for it has always proved the warning light that has heralded their destruction."

He quoted Milton at the close of this masterly article—Milton who wrote of England that she must regain her old supremacy of teaching the nations how to live—not by force but by example. Arthur Bryant asks us to think of England as we would have her, "a land of kindly, honest, just, tender and courageous men and women, serving not themselves but the whole world and doing to others as they would be done by."

Yes, this writer is always a teacher at heart, driving home the best of lessons. After describing our awful position on many occasions in the past when it seemed no power on earth could resist our enemies, he adds:

"Yet when the smoke of their cannonade has cleared away, England has always been still there, undismayed and undefeated and after a few years of growing unpleasantness has utterly routed and destroyed her would-be conqueror's hordes, causing him to perish by his own hands or seek an exile's death at Doorn or St. Helena."

Indeed you are right, Arthur Bryant, and there appears no exception to this rule.

I closed my last chapter on an Easter note, now I finish this upon a flag which embodies the English ideal of a people at their highest, dedicated to the service of Christian virtues.

I bow to St. George engaged in his congenial task of slaying a dragon and agree whole-heartedly with the writer of the trenchant article from which I have quoted, when he declares:

"It is probably no exaggeration to say that so long as England—in population, wealth and strength to-day the principal partner of that great brotherhood, the British Commonwealth of Nations—remains true to her ideals, tyranny can *never* permanently triumph!"

CHAPTER XV

MADAM—COMMIT MURDER!

IN days of peace before my beloved nephew, Terence Grogan, lost his life in that tragic disaster to H.M.S. *Hood*, he returned from many a long sea voyage laden with presents for us and our household. He selected his gifts with exquisite taste and I was the lucky recipient of some lovely Chinese shawls. One I particularly admired had a black ground which showed up innumerable coloured designs in such artistic grouping, it might have rivalled the flower-picture of any great artist. Each stitch a gem of delicate shading, so that birds with bright plumage and blossoms of every hue seemed to be alive. On each side of the material, in the Chinese way, the work was equally perfect and as I wrapped it round my shoulders and felt its heavy fringe weighing me down, I thought how gorgeous it would have looked on Mrs. Harold Gorst. It needed the Juno type to do it justice and not a woman of my size, weighing less than eight stone.

I said: "I know what I will do. I'll have the fringe removed and then the thrilling embroidery can be used on a perfectly beautiful "dress-creation" which I shall love to wear. Each finely tinted flower, each colourful bird, shall find its resting place in exactly the right position if a certain artist in clothes will consent to tackle the task."

I knew that artist, a court dressmaker, Parisienne to her finger-tips, Madame Fernande, whose taste is beyond question. I sought her out, spread the shawl before her bright far-seeing eyes and unfolded my ideas. She gave a little gasp of horror.

"Cut such work as that," she cried, "no—no—I could not, it would be murder!"

So emphatic was she, that her startling statement forced me to agree.

The shawl consequently remained unmolested by a modiste's scissors and came home to roost.

War broke out and party frocks were forgotten. It seemed difficult to recall the days when people thought of anything but the toil and sweat of those ghastly years. The big functions I attended were all in connection with war charities, Red Cross work and various schemes to help our country in her distress. As a Red Cross Vice-President I wore the neat dark blue uniform with its scarlet tabs and hat adorned by a bright cockade. I like all uniforms, but the Red Cross is my favourite.

In those days of peril there came the loss of the great ship H.M.S. *Hood*, taking with it that one who was just like a son to me. A never forgotten sorrow, a wound which cannot be healed. We bow the head and say with millions who mourn the Flower of our Land: "*Thy will be done.*"

The scene changes to peace. Once again feminine minds decide to honour its coming by remembering there is something to be said for beautiful clothes.

My Chinese shawl seemed to speak to me with a strange new voice. Terry had chosen it and to hide his gift away—pained me. I pictured the lovely embroidery on a dress, but this time as a "Memorial Dress." I took it to London again and to my delight found that Madame Fernande and her friend, Miss Anna Hunt, were alive and well. They had stood the shock of the war and were occupying their same premises in Old Bond Street. Both gave me a warm welcome after an absence of six years and described the raids they had survived in the heart of the capital, with many other vicissitudes. I told them they were looking just the same and they kindly said I was. I often think friends say that to please you, but there is something very genuine about these two clever people.

Madame Fernande's twinkling eyes were as bright and full of humour as ever. She exudes vitality. There is a *joie de vivre* in her personality which even the war could not kill. Built on generous lines, with a good carriage, she possesses that charming French manner we English could not acquire or imitate (unless we were fine actresses), because it is of the very soul of France. Miss Anna Hunt is, in appearance, a complete contrast to her partner. Fair, petite and more reserved, one feels she is typically British and a thorough good sort. The two balance each other perfectly.

A little ashamed of my mission, I produced the Chinese treasure, saying:

"Madame—I have come to ask you to commit murder! Take this shawl—roll it up, place it under your pillow and dream upon it. Create a dress which I can wear in memory of one so dear—so precious, who has given his life for England!"

She must have felt the trust I had in her, for she is very sensitive and

receptive. I knew whatever she did with those floral emblems and exotic birds, she could never destroy a perfect piece of work. She gazed at the sweeping plumage, green, golden, wine and blue, soft shades of colour mingling with full-blown cerise roses and smaller blooms whose smiling faces seem upraised to eternal sunlight.

I cannot tell what her dreams were after acceding to my request. Undoubtedly the artist in her was roused, for she produced in due time a masterpiece of craftsmanship.

Miss Anna Hunt wisely remarked as she looked at the finished work, how terrible if anyone, less of a genius than Madame, had attempted that skilfully planned frock with its quiet background of soft black material.

Many women possess Chinese shawls of great beauty. If they should feel inclined to follow my example and enjoy the delight of turning these works of art into modern dresses, let me beg them only to take the plunge if they can select a hand sufficiently skilled not to commit murder. Of course you don't find a Madame Fernande every day! It was fortunate for England's dress-world when she came to work in our capital. As a new-comer she found it difficult to learn her way about London. She recalls offering to pilot some friends from France to see the early flower market at Covent Garden. Deciding to take them by Underground, when about to alight she drew back saying: "I am quite sure this is not the station, this station is Bovril."

She often laughs when she sees the well-known advertisement, remembering how it misled her on a certain pilgrimage to Covent Garden in the early morning many years ago.

Miss Anna Hunt has a more serious recollection of her first visit to London as an inexperienced girl. Just on the threshold of young womanhood, when she was living a few miles from London, she had a wire to return at once to her home in Devonshire, as her brother had passed away. She had to travel alone to London, and spend some hours at a London terminus, before catching a late night train to her destination. Nervous and very depressed, she was seated in the station restaurant. A well-dressed woman noticed her and drew her into conversation. Anna, longing for someone to confide in, poured out her sorrowful tale and received ready sympathy. Presently the elegant stranger, whose appearance charmed the young girl, suggested that to pass the time till her train came in, they might take a short walk outside the station.

Anna, wearied by her long vigil, gladly fell in with this suggestion. Just as they reached the restaurant door, a woman behind the counter rushed after her and dragged her back.

"You must not go," she said imperatively, and before the words were out of her mouth, the elegant lady vanished like a streak of lightning. Then the attendant told the youthful traveller that if she hadn't seen her starting off just at that moment, Anna might never have been heard of again!

That is a really true story of at least one narrow escape from the snare of a white slave trafficker. Miss Anna Hunt will be thankful to her dying day that she escaped a fate far worse than death.

I feel that the Madame Fernande and Anna Hunt friendship must bring a sense of artistic pleasure to them both, for they strive so hard to please their clients.

I know that certain people who appreciate fashion at its best have been filled with nostalgia for dear fascinating Paris. They revelled in its atmosphere which came to London when an exhibition of French fashion dolls was on show at the Princes Gallery some months ago. One could see a kind of hungry longing in the eyes of many spectators. Strangely enough, several men who were discussing it at a luncheon party, seemed thoroughly enthralled by those exquisitely clothed dolls posed against typical Parisian backgrounds. A very masculine type of art collector first gave me the desire to see the slim-figured figurettes made so ingeniously of copper wire. He raved about their oval, piquant little plastic faces and charming coiffures. The beautiful cut and make of miniature clothes, elaborately embroidered, tucked, gathered and draped, entranced one who lived surrounded by priceless antiques. He would never have believed he could be so charmed by the tiny dressed-up creatures.

I think the detail impressed him most. It filled many an English designer with envy to note how the French mind saw that everything was perfect down to the tiny leather handbags and amusing wedge-soled shoes. Then those hats—how they screamed of Paris! Some so smart and becoming, others amusingly ridiculous, created out of artistically poised bows, posies, lace and net veils. Such a show spoke well for the creative genius of the French, expressing the spirit of irrepressible *espoirance* during the German occupation.

It was odd to see such personality portrayed in miniature. The art that created it was more easy to recognise than to define. I often wonder what that mysterious power called "charm" really is! In living men and women we recognise the vitality of mind, a vibrant musical voice, capacity to claim attention, but the colourful appeal of things created by hand seems almost uncanny. Those French fashion dolls exercised some influence over hundreds of visitors, many of whom went to the exhibition again and again, possibly dreaming of imitating in real life the tiny models, visualising themselves "dolled" out in like manner. A thirst for beauty deep down in the mind sprang to the forefront in an age of utility. Rationed women became escapists from reality and entered a pleasant world of make-believe.

"'Vanity of vanities,' said the preacher, 'vanity of vanities; all is vanity.'"

Ecclesiastes i, 2.

CHAPTER XVI

MR. POLLOCK PASSES ON

I FEEL that people who keep diaries (a thing I have never done) must thoroughly enjoy browsing over the pages as they grow older. It is a delightful recreation to re-live the past and what can resurrect it better than the written word? So I advise the young to keep memory green in this way. When I retrace my steps across the years I have to unlock the cellars of my Storehouse and the cells of my brain do their best to give up their dead. But I often wish I had cultivated sufficient patience to adopt the diary habit.

The Rev. Mostyn Prichard, writing to me about my autobiography said: "With the past always in your memory, you could never have a dull moment whatever these 'changed days' bring."

That is true, memory does dissipate dullness and Mr. Prichard who is one of the finest preachers it has been my privilege to hear, must have wonderful memories always at his command. He has just told us he is coming from his rectory at Blunham, Bedfordshire, to preach next Sunday, 5th May, at Westminster Abbey. He feels it will be extremely sad there without the good friend who gave him the invitation, the Right Rev. Paul de Labilliere, the late Dean of Westminster. He passed away quite recently after an operation and Mr. Prichard remarks what strange things happen in life, he never thought this would occur the very week he was due at the Abbey.

Our friendship with him started in Hampton when in 1942 he preached in our parish church for "The S.P.C.K." (Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge). So dynamic was his appeal that Theodore came straight back, wrote a cheque and sent it to the Vicarage, where he was lunching with our vicar, Mr. Charles, and his wife. This brought us the pleasure of a visit that same afternoon from Mr. Prichard and we found the personality which attracted us so much in the pulpit was equally arresting—I was going to say—"off the stage"—how dreadful of me!

We are sorry he lives so far from London. A man with his eloquence should be in the centre of things. He loves "dear old London" as he affectionately calls it and those who hear him at the Abbey should have a treat this coming Sunday in May.

Theodore wants him to write a book. Experts in spiritual experience may reach large congregations from their pulpits, but the silent power of the pen often spreads to the furthest corners of the earth. It has a

longer life than sound. Even thunder is short lived, while the help of a penny inkpot may chain down a thought for a century.

Writers who do not realise this great responsibility must indeed be dense. I often hold my breath and say: "O pen, let no poisoned word fall from the nib which scrawls my thoughts across this page."

"Scrawl" is the right word, for my pen simply flies. It needs my experienced typist, Mrs. Way, whom I applauded in my last book, to follow the frantic lines which I pray may not fall fruitless to the earth. Speech may also be fraught more than we credit with untold influence. Perhaps if we realised this—we should be so paralysed, we should never talk at all!

A passing word, well expressed, spoken from the heart, can cut more ice than some deep infallible utterance from a learned divine. Simple things may prove so satisfying, especially when drawn from personal experience. I was struck by the title of a book in a publisher's catalogue because it gave such good advice in five words: "Take a look at yourself." I added it to my library list because of the name. The blurb assured me that it played upon the common chords of human life.

I have always been amused at a remark made quite seriously by a woman who was recommending a patent medicine. "They speak very well of it in the advertisements," she assured her friend.

Since I commenced this chapter, 5th May has passed and to-day, 7th May, is a notable date for Westminster, the Abbey Division, which Winston Churchill truly said: "Claims with reason to be the heart of the British Empire and Commonwealth." He gave it this title when he became this morning Westminster's First Freeman. Those were well chosen words, as his always are, because in the shadow of Big Ben one feels the locality has heart-beats which throb and keep pace with the great clock's world-wide dignity.

The Mayor and Deputy High Steward, Mr. E. H. Keeling, M.C., M.P., presided at this historical ceremony which was held in the same hall as that used by the House of Commons during the flying bomb attacks. Mr. Churchill got a big laugh when he remarked he felt, as he entered, he had seen that place before!

I am not going to comment on his widely published words in regard to our sick world, a world which he said was "very ill," nor is it necessary in this chronicle of casual observations to repeat his grave warning that the future can only be saved by the generous and the strong. We turned on the radio with special interest because Mr. Keeling is our Member for the Twickenham Division of Middlesex and has held the seat since 1935. He welcomed the first Freeman in the history of Westminster in stirring terms and as we heard his familiar voice ringing out with its characteristic note of sincerity, we experienced a feeling of personal pride in the speaker. Somehow he seemed to belong to us,

surrounded as he was by many Members of the Cabinet and a whole host of illustrious representatives of our Empire.

If Mr. Churchill is the first Freeman of Westminster, I think I am right in saying that Mr. Keeling is its first Mayor who can write M.P. after his name during his term of office. The double position must be a very arduous one and it puzzles me how he can hold two such responsible posts with perfect equanimity and find time to give us so much attention in our constituency.

He and his tall elegant wife were dining with us a few nights back before a conservative meeting in the Hampton Public Hall. There was a great demand for tickets and an audience of three hundred crowded the not very spacious building, all eager to hear him speak. Of course, he filled the bill to perfection, but prefers answering questions and dealt with a number after his speech. I always admire the quick thinking and ready wit this requires, while brevity is, of course, a *sine qua non*.

It was a treat to the audience to see Mrs. Keeling on the platform, as unfortunately illness prevented her being at his side during his election campaign. She emerged from that sad period looking radiant in her ultra-fashionable hat and attractive costume. American by birth, she is only one of many fair women from the States, who, married to celebrated Englishmen, set us an example in smartness and brains. American girls travel so much more than our young English women—the love of it seems in their blood and from early youth to mature age they take a delight in visiting foreign countries.

Mrs. Keeling is no exception to the rule. She was educated at Roedean and then in Paris, Florence and Dresden. She met her husband in America and I do not wonder he fell for the charms of Martha Ann Munro, for she inherited good looks as well as poise and personal charm. Her mother was one of a trio of Darling sisters, known in New York as "The Three Graces," because of their contrasting and decorative appearance. One was blonde, another black (or I should say brunette) and Mrs. Keeling's mother—a red head. Her daughter's fair hair has a sunset tone and the Keelings' one boy, Christopher, is a red head. At present he is shaping as a cricketer at Eton, but wants eventually to go into politics like his father. I wonder if he will be as great a traveller as his parents. They are both so keen on travelling that they have been to every country in Europe. Mrs. Keeling has not visited Russia, but her husband not only knows that country well, but wrote a book, *In Russia Under the Bolsheviks*, published in 1920 and in 1924, followed it up with : *Adventures in Turkey and Russia*. He made a wonderful escape from Turkey as an officer in the first great war and the world is lucky when these ghastly national tragedies spare such men as Mr. Keeling. He is one of a family of nine, but Theodore beats him as the youngest but one of sixteen—all children of the same mother.

Mr. Keeling's father was a famous headmaster of Bradford Grammar

School for 46 years. I have written of Theodore's father (that great Christian philanthropist) in my autobiography, so need repeat no further particulars here of a remarkable man who incidentally did his full share in adding to the population. One can give him and my pretty little mother-in-law the credit of having produced a very nice family into which I was admitted with such gracious kindness.

As we have no children perhaps it is not surprising we have always intensely loved and spoilt our domestic pets. Spoilt children are a sad embarrassment, but over-indulged animals are generally most delightful and friendly additions to the home. When they are made much of they take their rightful position, and sometimes it is quite amusing to see how they rule their masters. Dogs especially seize any advantage of sharing human facilities for comfort, ours have never been forbidden sofas, armchairs or even their owners' beds.

Many years ago there was a familiar figure on the Thames between Molesey Lock and Sunbury, a retired General Stevens, living in Hampton, a very old friend of ours. Throughout the spring, summer and autumn months he appeared to spend his entire time in a dinghy. In fact, he loved the river so much he was almost as familiar a sight as the willows bending over the stream. He wagged his craft along with one paddle from the stern and in the bows his faithful bull-terrier was always stationed, an impressive figurine. The General was never seen without this dog. Eventually the day came when old age robbed him of his canine companion and because "Bully" was so well known to the river public, his master announced the death in our local paper—*The Surrey Comet*. It is the only time I ever remember an animal being favoured by a memorial notice. We know many people give them graves that are kept in perfect condition.

Our old friend, Lady MacGregor, who lived so long at Hampton Court Palace and was responsible for introducing Theodore to me at a palace wedding, absolutely worshipped her little Charles I spaniel, "Tottles." Being childless, he was for fifteen years her pride and joy. Towards the end of his life she gave up her apartment at Monte Carlo which she had always visited in the winter because she could not bear to be parted from her beloved pet. She preferred to face the rigours of an English winter than his pathetic eyes when she bade him farewell. The usual tragedy occurred when old age gathered Tottles to his ancestors. Lady MacGregor was broken-hearted over the loss and called on us to know if he might be buried in our garden. She had a small garden of her own in a private part of the palace grounds. She explained she did not want to lay Tottles to rest there, as at her death it would pass to another owner. She felt as "St. Albans" was our personal property, the grave would remain undisturbed probably long after her own decease, which it has done. It is marked by a marble stone which stands at the head, and some people in a boat passing our garden were heard to

say: "Oh! look, there's a child's grave." Lady MacGregor ordered an oak coffin lined with white satin and yearly on the anniversary of Tottles death came to place a floral tribute to his memory on the white slab.

I do not think it strange that animals entwine themselves round one's heart with such strong tentacles. Their love is so great and they can never say an unkind word. They just give the most perfect companionship and I must say a flattering one, for is not a dog's master his little god?

We have just had what seems like a family bereavement and our living-room is strangely silent in consequence. Our dear parrot, "Mr. Pollock," fell ill suddenly and descending from his perch, lay down at the bottom of his cage and passed peacefully away, to our deep regret. He was only twenty years old, young for a parrot, though the lovely green species are not so long lived as the grey kind. Mr. Pollock was most ornamental with emerald feathers and under his wide wings flashes of crimson, toning off to deep blue and yellow. People often asked for a shed feather, to ornament a hat. No dye could have produced such soft or artistic hues. He adored children and would spread out his lovely tail to express delight at the sight of any young visitors. When they approached his cage he went wild with joy, dancing up and down and chattering excitedly. They loved to hear him talk and whistle and he would, when out in the garden, shout loudly to children passing in boats or on the towing path opposite. The day before he died he sat sleepily on his perch, ate nothing and said no word. We knew he was not well. Then when I covered him up that last night of his life, he said in a very musical voice, quite unfamiliar because of its softness, "good-bye." This was followed by his usual "go to bed," a remark he always made when he wanted to be covered up. Then he would swing himself to sleep. Every morning, except on the day he died, when Hilda uncovered him he greeted the morn with a cheerful "wake up!"

Hilda was his love, she could do anything with him. He nibbled her hand affectionately, pulled her hair and yelled ecstatically: "Hulloa!" when she came in after a brief absence, but woe betide anyone else who put a finger in his cage. Her grief was great at losing this adoring pet. He lies buried near Tottles in the St. Albans shrubbery.

A strange incident occurred in connection with the dear bird's death. Our friend, Clifford Frost, a psychic bachelor who frequently visits us, gets visions if you sit quietly with him. My husband says: "Now, Clifford, what do you see?" Strangely enough he often does see either the past or future. He happened to be with us the Sunday before Polly died. "Mr. Pollock" appeared in the best of health, having entertained some children in the afternoon who were fascinated by his antics and vivacity.

After supper we were sitting quietly over the fire and Clifford announced my mother had "come through." In other words, she appeared

to him from the invisible world. He was surprised to see that she was holding out her hand and that our green parrot was perched upon it. He had never connected her in any way with Polly and it happens she had a great horror of a bird loose in the room. The vision appeared to be meaningless and conveyed nothing to our minds at the time, but when a few days later the parrot died, we were all convinced she was showing Clifford that the bird was no longer for this world. I hope there is a heaven for animals and that Polly, who would never come out of his spacious cage, is flying about in Elysian fields!

Clifford's clairvoyance is strictly reserved for friends in private. He would never practise it publicly or for money. He has brought great comfort to a friend of ours who lost her husband many years ago and her only son in the last war. Both appeared to Clifford when he was "sitting" with the widow, so that he could accurately describe these two he had never seen and bring most evidential messages to her amazement and joy. It is a God-sent power and heals broken spirits in a miraculous way. He takes it quite simply, as if it were nothing surprising, but just a natural gift peculiar to himself. I have noticed with people thus endowed that any pride or false living robs them of the faculty.

Concerning these things which materialists find so hard to comprehend, there is so much unbelief, occasionally accompanied by fear, that many who are psychic hesitate to come out into the open.

"Lighten our darkness" is a prayer we might offer up morning, noon and night. The darkness of ignorance is like a cloud on the spiritual horizon, often forcing the enlightened, who dread ridicule, to hide their light under a bushel.

Basil Stewart quotes in his booklet, *Man's Inheritance*, a remark made by the distinguished French astronomer and writer, Camille Flammarion, and declares it might well be applied to spiritualism as far as the mass of people is concerned. The quotation: "I am at times unable to decide which is the worst to have to combat, the incredibility of the intellectual or the ignorance of the uninstructed."

True indeed, and so I feel that Clifford is right to be retiring about his flights into this strange world which opens out to him.

Let us respect all who can rise into the higher realms of thought. I, for one, envy "the seers" their lofty order of intelligence and lament the limitations of those many scoffers who are bound irretrievably to the earth-plane.

CHAPTER XVII

WHITE LODGE

I HAVE said before what a strange dislike I have of accumulation, and this kink has resulted in my tearing up many letters I would have done well to preserve. In my mother's lifetime, when I was away from home she wrote to me every day and how I should love to read over again now all those personal details of her home life, ruthlessly destroyed. Theodore's forethought, as I mentioned in a previous chapter, preserved quite a batch of interesting letters from well-known people, but I can take no share in their preservation.

So it surprised me not a little, on turning out a drawer in an old desk, to discover a letter addressed to myself, dated 17th November, 1885. How it had survived all these years is a mystery. I was a small child when I was honoured to receive this particularly gracious epistle. The envelope of course bears a faded mauve stamp decorated by Queen Victoria's head. The handwriting is clear, very large, pointed and old-fashioned. It would be well if people to-day wrote like the early Victorians, since I find I often have to waste a lot of precious time deciphering the letters piled on my table from friends and strangers. Fighting time and wrestling with correspondence eats up so much energy in the life of us busy ones, that clear handwriting should be practised as an unselfish duty.

But to return to this letter which sprang out of the past and gave me quite a thrill as it painted a picture of old days which I will explain in a few words. The letter that brought back my childhood was heavily black-edged with a doleful border a quarter of an inch thick. It bore a large black crown above a monogram and the address with big flourishing capitals to each word was:

White Lodge,

Richmond Park.

This letter to a small child came from Queen Mary's father, the Duke of Teck, and was addressed to Miss Winnie Graham, St. Albans, Hampton.

Strange I should still occupy the house I lived in since babyhood!

Now before I give the letter from this kindly gentleman I must describe how I met him. We were frequently at East Sheen in those days, relations lived there and many were the parties my sister and I attended in that pleasant neighbourhood, then so quiet and dignified.

The large houses were chiefly occupied by well known society people. It was what the Victorians called with pride—"an exclusive district."

In my earliest years I was trained to help at charity bazaars and amateur concerts. I was what the present age would look on with either ridicule or tolerant forbearance—a child reciter. My mother, who really acted beautifully and was often tempted to go on the stage by professional producers offering her large salaries, coached me, so that young as I was, my name appeared on many programmes.

A fashionable bazaar had been fixed to take place at East Sheen and royalty promised to be present. I was to assist in two items at a concert during the proceedings.

My first appearance was as a figure in *Mrs. Jarley's Waxworks*, and later I had to recite.

I fancy that Mrs. Jarley and her human figures got up as waxworks round the stage is a thing of the past. In those days it was a most popular turn.

Mrs. Jarley, the show-woman, frequently acted by a man and always by someone good at patter, wound up the figures with a large key, which made a great deal of noise: whether the sound was done "off stage" or by Mrs. Jarley herself I do not remember, but it was certainly part of the fun. Then the stiff antics of the living waxworks convulsed the audience. I think people were easily amused in those days!

At that particular performance I took the part of "the talking walking doll." My fair hair was frizzed out to look as much like a doll's as possible and I wore a very short white frock. Before being wound up, Mrs. Jarley pulled out my arms stiffly in front of me and when the formidable key had done its work I strutted for a few yards, saying in a very artificial voice: "Mum-ma, Pup-pa," until the imaginary machinery ran down.

Seated in the front row of the audience was the late Duke of Teck, with his grown-up daughter, Princess May, now our beloved Queen Mary. Fair-haired, stately and tall, she looked to me like a fairy princess. I was naturally impressed to find myself acting before royalty, especially as in the second half of the programme I was down to recite *The Charge of the Light Brigade*. A strange choice, it seems now, for that little creature in its doll's dress. I am sure Mother urged me to put into the familiar poem as much fire as possible. Doubtless I was told to address the stirring lines to the handsome Duke and his charming daughter, as far as I could from my elevated position on the platform.

It appears I carried off my laurels well, for at the close of the performance the Duke of Teck expressed a wish to talk to "the little doll," and I was ushered up to the royal couple before they left their seats.

Well, it ended by the Duke not only speaking in the friendliest terms to this favoured child, but he presented me with a fan, which I treasured for many years. I remember writing to thank him again for the welcome

gift, decorating my notepaper with a sprig of edelweiss I had brought from Switzerland. His answer to that letter which has survived all these years since "the little doll" did her bit at that East Sheen Bazaar, runs as follows:

"The Duke of Teck presents his compliments to little Miss Winnie and begs to offer her his very best thanks for the kind expressions contained in her letter, as well as for the edelweiss from Interlaken. The Duke also wishes to assure Miss Winnie that he will be much pleased to see her again and promises to be the first in making his most respectful bow wherever he may meet her."

Now wasn't that a sweet and gracious letter to a small child? I am glad I preserved it, for in advanced age its courtesy warms my heart.

Talking of letters, I received one from a stranger this morning, telling me a somewhat remarkable incident in connection with the psychic instinct of animals. This is what occurred at the Memorial Service of the late Dr. Rose Turner, who was the hon. sec. and mainstay of the "Ada Cole Memorial Stables" at South Mimms, Herts, and had up to 1938 rescued a thousand old and ill-used horses. Just as the coffin covered with the Union Jack was being carried into St. Pancras Church, an unharnessed horse with a shining black coat, led by a soldier, was standing waiting for the traffic lights at that corner. It shivered all over, shook its head and whinnied loudly, as if to say: "There goes our friend!" This admirer of Dr. Turner said she had enjoyed reading my book, *What Next?* and that gave her the thought to write to me of this "coincidence."

I much appreciated receiving the anecdote and do not consider it was a "coincidence." I feel the spirit of that good woman was sensed by the horse who wished to express his gratitude for all she had done for his kind. The "shivering" indicates a spirit presence, for dogs tremble violently in haunted houses where they feel unseen entities. I believe that horses are just as psychic as dogs. Naturally dogs being more domesticated, have greater opportunities of re-acting to influences.

The Rev. David Jenkins, Rector of St. Brides-super-Ely, who is a pen-friend of mine—we correspond, though we have never met—says in a recent letter:

"I have the picture of a little terrier dog in my study who looks at me with his head on one side as if telling me a secret. Underneath is written: 'Sometimes I sit and *think* and sometimes I *sit*.'"

Mr. Jenkins adds after dilating on the troubles of the post-war world:

"I sometimes tell this little dog, my pet picture-friend, 'Don't let us worry over it if we simply *sit* but wait till something of interest comes our way over which we shall again rejoice.'"

It seems to me something of interest is always coming my way, for which I am profoundly grateful. I thoroughly endorse Emerson's wise

saying: "The pleasure of life is according to the man that lives it and not according to the work or place."

Again I am lucky in regard to "place" with the lovely Thames flowing by and all the St. Albans windows facing south to catch the sunlight and view the peaceful stream.

We have recently made friends with a very remarkable couple, Sir John and Lady Anderson, who have a charming home—"Astra Lea," Crowborough, a neighbourhood so well known to lovers of Sussex. It is just the right atmosphere for talented people in which to develop their artistic tendencies. Sir John Anderson, Bart., the husband of clever Muriel Anderson, is sometimes confused with the Rt. Hon. Sir John Anderson, Privy Councillor. The two Sir Johns and their wives live within six miles of each other, so are frequently embarrassed by letters, parcels and phone calls reaching the wrong house. It must be confusing to people who are hazy about addresses and telephone numbers.

The Sir John and Lady Anderson we know at "Astra Lea" came to Crowborough after being bombed out of their house in Bath during the big raid when so much damage was done to that famous city.

On the fatal night, a few seconds before her home was struck, Lady Anderson, who is very psychic, called her husband and maids to a certain spot in their Georgian house where she knew they would be safe. No sooner had they gathered there, than a direct hit shattered the building which was entirely destroyed. As if by a miracle they all remained uninjured. An hotel took them in. Lady Anderson arrived only covered by her fur coat, the pyjamas she was wearing during the raid having been entirely stripped off her by the blast. She would not allow herself to be affected by the awful shock and no sooner was she safely under the hotel roof than she declared she must find a piano at once, as she was inspired to compose. She sat down calmly at the instrument and straight away produced the music and words of a song. The B.B.C. were so impressed by the composition, they broadcast it to the world. Both the music and words were most attractive. She named the song *Joy Bells*, though it seems it was written at a moment when joy might well have been far from the mind! The final verse ended with the hopeful words:

"Joy Bells are ringing
To herald happy days again."

Composing is one of Lady Anderson's many talents and at the time I am writing, her latest composition has been warmly welcomed by music-lovers. It is a new ballet, called *King Sun*, and has been presented by the Russian Ballet League at Tunbridge Wells, Brighton and Worthing. At Brighton, Lady Anderson came before the curtain to thank the crowded audience for its reception and Madam Nicolaeva-Legat for her interpretation of the music; she arranged the choreography.

Lady Anderson was also responsible for designing all the costumes. She is an artist and exhibits her pictures, a great love of colour shows

itself in the decoration of her home and her own individual style of dress. Her favourite costume is a scarlet and white tartan skirt worn with a scarlet blouse. The interior of their house gives a cheery welcome with its yellow walls, doors and windows, while outside the window frames are painted scarlet.

"Astra Lea" is built of Sussex granite halfway up and the other half Sussex tiles. At the top of the house Lady Anderson has a studio, furnished with enamelled scarlet chairs and ottomans. The result of her work there is seen on the walls of her house which display her brightly hued canvasses. One of her maids frequently appears in period costume to go with the antique furniture, a fashion I do not think her friends will follow in these days of coupons. Historical dresses would greatly help the atmosphere of many old places I know, perhaps it will become a fashion of the future set by the vivacious "Astra Lea" hostess.

Sir John and Lady Andersons' names frequently appear in *The Times* advertisements. They insert paragraphs begging people to *think* rightly, with words of advice on this important subject, which brings them thousands of letters. At Christmas every one of their unknown correspondents receives a greeting card with a guiding message. The words of these messages they believe are inspired by great thinkers, philosophers, artists and musicians, and come through automatic writing.

Don't imagine this is only kept for Christmas, all the time they are working to spread their ideas. Both compose verses and pamphlets on "Right Thinking," "Thought Vibrations," and many spiritual matters. So earnestly do they depict how our future depends on our own volition through the cause and effect of our thought vibrations, that even scoffers must respect their enthusiasm and devotion to this ideal. They call it a World-wide Crusade for the spiritual regeneration of humanity by the individual application of right thinking. Sir John is writing a book on the subject which he intends calling *Sixth Sense*.

I must, before I stop telling you about these two unusual characters, whisper a bedroom secret which they declare vitalises them. In their double bed they have two magnets to give them vitality and they feel sure all people who suffer from cramp should instal this little bit of magic between the sheets or beneath the pillow. It is said to be an infallible cure for cramp. Their magnets are arranged in a case with each magnet an inch apart, mounted on wood with a steel bar fixed between, but not touching the magnets. This creates, they say, a vibration which energises the system. One magnet, they assure their friends, is enough to cure cramp in a night. Lady Anderson claims that she never feels ill or unhappy. I have not in all my long life ever before heard a living person make that declaration. Lady Anderson is a remarkable and very fortunate woman. It speaks well for her husband; they appear to be an ideal couple, enjoying every moment of their busy life which she tells me starts at 5.30 a.m. and they go to bed about 8 to 8.30 p.m.

Now it is time for me to go to bed, but I have no magnet to keep my hot water bottle company on this cold May night. The B.B.C. has just announced we shall have ground frost and I was glad on the fifteenth day of this so-called "Merry Month" to wear my winter furs. Foreigners must think we have a very treacherous and changeable climate, but let us hope it is the only treachery they find in dear old England!

CHAPTER XVIII

I AM PAID TO DINE OUT!

I HAVE only once in my life been offered money for my presence at a dinner! I need hardly say the fee was not to be expended on myself, but I will relate the incident because it afforded us some amusement at the time.

It was a few years before the 1914 war, when Theodore and I were working hard for the Spelethorne Division, being keen Conservatives, and Hampton had not then been joined to Twickenham. Theodore was Treasurer of our Conservative Association and I was Vice-Chairman.

As all good treasurers should, he wrote to solicit subscriptions from leading lights of the neighbourhood. His appeal included the late Sir Edward Nicholl, K.B.E., then living in a large mansion at Littleton, Shepperton, surrounded by an imposing park and grounds. He was one of those much to be admired people who, starting at scratch, worked his way up to the millionaire rank. A shipowner at Cardiff, a Commander, R.N.R., a Deputy-Lieutenant and M.P. for Penryn and Falmouth were some of his activities before we met him.

His reply to Theodore's suggestion that he should subscribe to the Conservative Association since he was in our division, was distinctly original. We had been introduced to him and spoke for a few minutes at the Metropole, Brighton, after he made a speech at a public meeting. We exchanged a few friendly words and that was all. His letter to Theodore stated he could not increase his subscriptions locally or elsewhere because he had already so many good causes to support. To prove the truth of this statement he enclosed a long printed paper detailing his annual contributions to various charities and societies, certainly a most imposing list. He kept it to accompany his refusals when fresh requests came by post—probably almost daily. But in this case, there was a loophole. The letter concluded with the surprising statement that he would be pleased to send Theodore a cheque for our Conservative cause if he would bring his wife to dinner at Littleton Park. The date of the

dinner-party was stated and we were thoroughly tickled at the condition named. I said to Theodore: "Of course we must accept!"

So that is how our friendship started with this original man, and we met delightful people at his dinner-party. Certainly it was a new experience to draw forth a subscription so pleasantly. I felt quite proud when Theodore received the cheque and wish I could remember the figure on this far-off date, it would be fun to recall at what price my presence was valued!

Sir Edward had an enormous ballroom and later we were invited to a big dance at which I met Miss Louise Andrée Coury, then editress of *The Queen*. Almost the first thing she said to me was: "I believe Warwick Deeping is expected to-night, can you point him out to me because I want to ask him to write a serial for *The Queen*?" I know both Warwick and his pretty wife, but neither materialised at Sir Edward's magnificent entertainment that evening.

Anyway, Louise Coury, who later became an intimate friend of ours and stayed with us at "St. Albans," ended by roping me in to do the serial she was seeking. It was the first of my three books about the woman cat burglar, Miss Woolfe, who became one of my most popular heroines—if one can call her a heroine. She had a heart for the underdog and was amazingly brave, an unscrupulous creature with the keenest wit and brimful of originality. The first of this series carried splendid full page illustrations in *The Queen* and was entitled: "A Wolf Of The Evenings." In this chronicle of Miss Woolfe's desperate career, she did church work by day and cat-burgled at night. I must say her character gripped me and she seemed to live more vividly in my imagination than any other personality in my long output of thrillers. I described her as inheriting great physical strength from her father, a champion boxer, while her Russian mother, who lived within hearing of the wolves, was responsible for the wild wolf strain in the child she called "Lou."

The second book about this daring adventuress, named *The Last Laugh*, finished up in its fortieth thousand and was not the last of the series. She finally made her farewell bow in *Wolf-Net*, reforming at the eleventh hour, and I was glad when the Press said Lou was "well worth a place beside the kin of Raffles and Lupin."

Wolf-Net had a local interest because among her exploits Miss Woolfe carried out a sensational coup at Hampton Court Palace, stealing a valuable Rubens from the picture galleries.

But I am straying away from Sir Edward Nicholl. I recall the last time we saw him after he left Littleton to live at West Hill, Putney.

We went to tea with him at that big house, just ourselves; generally we met him surrounded by guests. To entertain Theodore he produced his ledger, revealing a long list of large blocks of Government and other gilt-edge securities running into hundreds of thousands. It certainly was a most impressive exhibit. We thought it was quite the quaintest visit

we had ever paid. There was something simple and primitive in the millionaire who had made a fortune through his own strenuous labours, revelling in the fruits those years of work represented in black and white.

He wrote his life, which was indeed a full one, and what I specially liked about him was his love of children. I picture him in advanced age, sharing the delights of a gorgeous playroom set apart for happy young relatives and their friends. There were generally children staying in the house and for their benefit Sir Edward installed in a spacious apartment the most marvellous toy railway. Trains flew round this room at an incredible speed, there were stations, tunnels, signal-boxes, etc., with all the effects modern lighting could produce. It was a paradise for boys and girls, especially the boys who were mechanically minded. The kind host would join in their pleasures with unrestrained enthusiasm. He certainly was an unusual character and a many-sided man; his interests were vast. He did great things for homeless orphaned children and founded the "Edward Nicholl Home for Waifs and Strays" in Cardiff. To see him amongst the little ones it seemed this celebrated marine engineer and shipowner forgot he was a magnate in the world of finance (a position he had gained by the sweat of his brow), and became a child again at heart.

To understand children I feel one must look back and try to visualise one's own childhood, however remote that period may seem with years stretching between the "then" and "now" like a yawning gulf. We may well ask ourselves if we ever were those small people we vaguely recall! Strange how the earliest memories flash back and simple words or happenings reappear on memory's scroll. My mother recalled in old age how on the eve of her sixth birthday she said with a sigh: "Good-bye, poor old five!"

I sometimes wonder how old I was when a simple incident which makes me smile occurred while I was praying. My sister Evelyn and I slept as children in the same room and it happened one evening that "Papa" came in to tell us something, and seeing that I was saying my prayers discreetly withdrew, waited a few minutes and then reappeared, only to find me still on my knees. This happened several times, till at last he whispered to Evelyn: "Isn't Winnie a very long time at her prayers?"

Evelyn replied: "Well, you see, every time you come into the room she has to begin them all over again!"

Very few people at my age tread the garden walks of their earliest memories and dwell under the same roof which sheltered them in childhood. Long association with "Father Thames" has I think put the love of running water into my blood; how I should hate to live away from it now!

When clever and vivacious Dr. Hilary Ledger-Wood was calling on us the other day, we were in the garden. Gazing at the river she quoted Sir Owen Seaman, who translated some words of Heine, embodying them in a poem. They exactly express my feelings:

"Water, says Heine, lends a landscape grace
Like eyes that charm us in a woman's face."

To me the finest scenery in the world is not quite perfect without some water. How greatly mountain beauty is increased when the lofty hills look down upon the calm mirror of a lake, or the mountain streams fall over rocky crags. Talking of water reminds me of a lovely allusion to Christ's turning water into wine at the marriage feast:

"The modest water saw its God and blushed."

Richard Crashaw (1670) wrote the Latin epigram in pentameter verse:

"Nympha pudica Deum vidit et erubuit."

I shall always think of those poetical words concerning "the modest water" blushing in the waterpots a rosy red when Jesus looked upon the six vessels of stone, each containing two or three firkins. What a dramatic picture it makes after He ordered them to be filled, the servants bearing the contents at Our Lord's request to the ruler of the feast and the astonishment of the delighted governor when he tasted the water that was made wine! It seems wonderful that a simple marriage in Cana of Galilee should hold its place in history through all these centuries! Of many people it might be said to-day: "They have no wine." I am not thinking of war shortage, but of the wine of goodness, warmth and charity. Water dominates the Gospels; there are the sea stories, the scenes of Jesus and John baptizing, the pool of Siloam, and Jacob's Well in that City of Samaria, called Sychar. Only too few in this unbelieving world ask for the water of which the Master said:

"Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

I love the ending of that story, when the woman of Samaria who claimed to have no husband, but had five husbands who were not her lawful partners, discovered she was talking to a prophet. On saying: "I know that Messiah cometh," she received the simple reply: "I that speak unto thee am he."

Beautiful, beautiful words—what jewels of phrasing rise before our eyes and bloom like flowers between the pages of *the Book*!

To switch from Jacob's Well to something more modern, our old Wishing Well in the "St. Albans" garden is very popular with children, especially since Theodore thought of making them walk round it three times before wishing, to increase the excitement.

One child visitor brought an empty medicine bottle to take some of the magic water home. The spot has certainly a mystic atmosphere calculated to impress young and old alike. The ancient marble well-head has a dark dome-shaped cover surmounted by a Maltese cross. Its icy spring water flows into the adjoining swimming-pool, a silent sombre bath shrouded by trees. The water running through it is exquisitely pure and has medical properties, so we were told when it was analysed, but it needs courage to take a dip in this terribly cold bath which we use during an occasional heat-wave. Generally we prefer the river for our morning swim, taken from a raft moored to the lawn.

Then when you emerge it is restful to stretch yourself full-length in the sun and let its rays stir the blood lying dormant within you, for the boards of the friendly raft wax warmer than many a blanket in winter.

Often, if I run down for my swim directly I wake, I say that familiar morning hymn which commences:

“Awake my soul, and with the sun
Thy daily stage of duty run,
Shake off dull sloth and early rise
To pay thy morning sacrifice.”

That is a very old hymn, for recently I found it in a little book of Prayers, Collects and Hymns, dated 1829. The matter was said to be selected from the works of most eminent divines (Ancient and Modern)—not very modern now, though many an old-world chant still bears this ill-fitting word.

As I was writing this chapter which alludes to prayer, a letter came from a dear distant friend, Mrs. George Pinckard (Ruby). This once familiar London hostess, who with her husband gave so many delightful pre-war parties in Mayfair, lives now at North Crescent Heights, Hollywood, California. She says how they are revelling in the sunshine. Her letter dated 20th April (not sent by Air Mail) only rolled up on this day of 21st May. She tells me they listened on Easter Sunday to the Sunrise Services on the Radio. She is not strong and could not go to the mountains to see the sun rise, but assures us it was impressive even on the Radio. I had never before heard of that idea, a service at sunrise—it sounds fascinating. She speaks of all the flowers they had sent them and the Arum Lilies in the gardens. She worries a good deal over our food rationing in England and we receive the most delicious parcels from this kind donor who never forgets old friends.

Her long chatty letter concludes with these words:

“I find an early prayer when *just awake* is helpful:
‘This is the day that the Lord hath made—
We will be *glad* and rejoice in it.’”

I liked the words so much that I wanted to pass them on to my readers.

It seems strange to think of Mr. and Mrs. George Pinckard living quietly, though I do not doubt they have many friends in Hollywood. She frequently tells me of the various well-known people who have visited them. Even so, it must seem quiet and retired after their busy life in England. Besides a London house, they had Combe Court, Chiddington, when we first met them. Combe Court was rightly considered one of the most beautiful estates in England—with 2,000 acres of shooting. At one time George Pinckard owned the weekly *Saturday Review* and the *Yachting Monthly*.

He was always the soul of generosity, and in 1911 presented the War Office with 450 acres of grassland containing cottages and stables which the Government valued at £20,000. This was given for twenty-one years at one shilling a year!

Though Ruby Pinckard's father was the Rev. C. Fryer Eastburn, Rural Dean of Medbourne, Leicester, she always seemed in love with America, and at one time we thought she was American. Now I feel this can be explained, because I have discovered she is a descendant of Captain Robert Eastburn, prominent in the history of the American Revolution, 1776, and also of Bishop Manton Eastburn, of Massachusetts, U.S.A.

Strange how old ancestry clings to the blood and sings in the veins. America I feel has always called to her and I suspect she has no intention of returning to the land of her birth. I fear we shall have to fly to Hollywood in order to see those old friends again. I often pass the American planned house, "Hays Lodge," in John Street, Mayfair, which they built for themselves and where so many interesting gatherings took place.

Such is life, friends come and go, but with us they always remain in our hearts. Living or dead, those who have ever given me pleasure are as alive as if I saw them coming in at the door with outstretched hands.

And so I say, with humble reverence for those who have departed in faith from our mortal ken—and with continued affection for the ones we hope to see again on this earth:

"Thank God for Memory!"

CHAPTER XIX OF THINGS CLERICAL

I THINK that one of God's greatest gifts to mankind is imagination. Those who do not possess this mental faculty have no idea what they miss in life. Inventive powers must often find birth in a mind full of images and fancies, while poets know that unwritten words "sweetly creep into the study of imagination" before pen reaches paper.

At a morning service, one weekday, our Hampton vicar, the Rev. Charles Knapp, gave a list of suggestions for prayers to be offered on various subjects. The sick, the bereaved, the countries in distress, etc.—then came the rather surprising: "Will you pray for imagination." I wondered how many of his parishioners had ever thought of making this a subject of prayer!

Mr. Knapp is distinctly original. If I were a reader of faces, I should say that besides an irresistible sense of humour, his features denote a high degree of fancy or invention. I know now I should not have been far wrong, for the Sunday following that morning when he named imagination as something to pray for, he preached a surprising sermon, the most unusual I have ever heard. We walked back from church with the Rev. Edward St. George Schomberg, Master of the Charterhouse, and he was struck by the originality of the discourse, declaring with a smile: "It made the choir-boys sit up and listen!"

Having whetted my reader's appetite, I feel I must try and recall this sermon in brief, or rather some of its points. It dealt with a series of impressions and sensations so vividly apprehended that they seemed alive and not merely a conception of the brain.

The vicar described how a few evenings previously he was sitting alone in his stall after Evensong was ended and by the word "alone" he meant nobody else was there materially, though the power of imagination brought him some unusual companions.

It was quiet with the soft evening light fading into the east window and his thoughts turned to the building of the church, the mason's work, the planning, the great arches, all made for the praise and worship of God.

Now before I continue I must explain that two carved angels support the chancel arch, looking at each other across space. Mr. Knapp during his meditation provided them with names as well as voices when he told us:

"As I was sitting quietly, the angel under the arch on the north side of the sanctuary whispered to the angel under the arch on the south side of the sanctuary: 'How are you feeling now, Austral?' 'Oh! I'm bearing up, thank you, Boreal. I feel the weight more trying to bear sometimes than at other times, but it is all very interesting.'"

This sudden information excited the congregation, some sat up a little straighter and the choir-boys looked curiously at the angels over their heads. They were, I felt, like children enthralled by a fairy tale.

The vicar continued:

"'Bearing up, do you say?' whispered Boreal. 'Why, we do nothing else and we are never even expected to be tired.'"

This was certainly true, but now I shall wonder if those white-winged shoulders could possibly ache!

" 'Oh! I never get tired,' replied Austral. 'All that I feel I should like to do sometimes is to look up. We are not made to look up, all our gaze is directed towards the faithful children of men, those who kneel at the steps of the altar, the members, the choir and those who come alone to speak to the Holiest.' "

(I must just mention, for those who do not know our church, these carved angels' heads are bent downward.) But to continue:

" 'Yes,' answered Boreal, 'it is all very interesting. You know I like to see all the children of men coming together, there is so much that can be done if we are all together. Look at you and me carrying the whole weight of this huge arch, not alone—we are doing it together and we can always whisper across like this, it certainly helps to pass what these mortal creatures are pleased to call the time.' "

A moment's pause and I sensed the amazement in the minds of rows and rows of prosaic worshippers who probably never sat silently romancing, much less in a church, and I wondered how they were taking it, since Mr. Knapp had never preached in this strain before. With quickened curiosity and renewed attention we waited for his next words. They were equally astonishing for he said with special emphasis, as if the phenomena had really occurred:

"And then from the east window came the voice of one of the archangels beginning the evening Alleluias as the sun began to set and the rood-screen cracked and creaked and the pillars settled themselves for the night. 'I wish you angels would be less noisy,' said the rood-screen. 'It takes such a long time for me to grow into my rich dark colour and I do like to do it quietly. I know I am not so useful as all you others. There is no weight for me to carry and I have no colours for the sun to flash into the eyes of men. All I do is to be quite still and try to look as beautiful as I can.'

" 'For a quite newcomer, Rood-screen,' said Austral, 'you behave fairly well, it would be difficult indeed for all of us if we felt we had to spell your name in a different way—' "

As this pun rolled out in quite solemn tones from the pulpit I had a kind of Alice-in-Wonderland feeling. Was I really among inanimate objects, or had they the power of speech and could that dignified screen in front of our pew be rude if it chose?

The preacher continued Austral's remarks to the finely carved screen bearing the names of the fallen in the 1914 war:

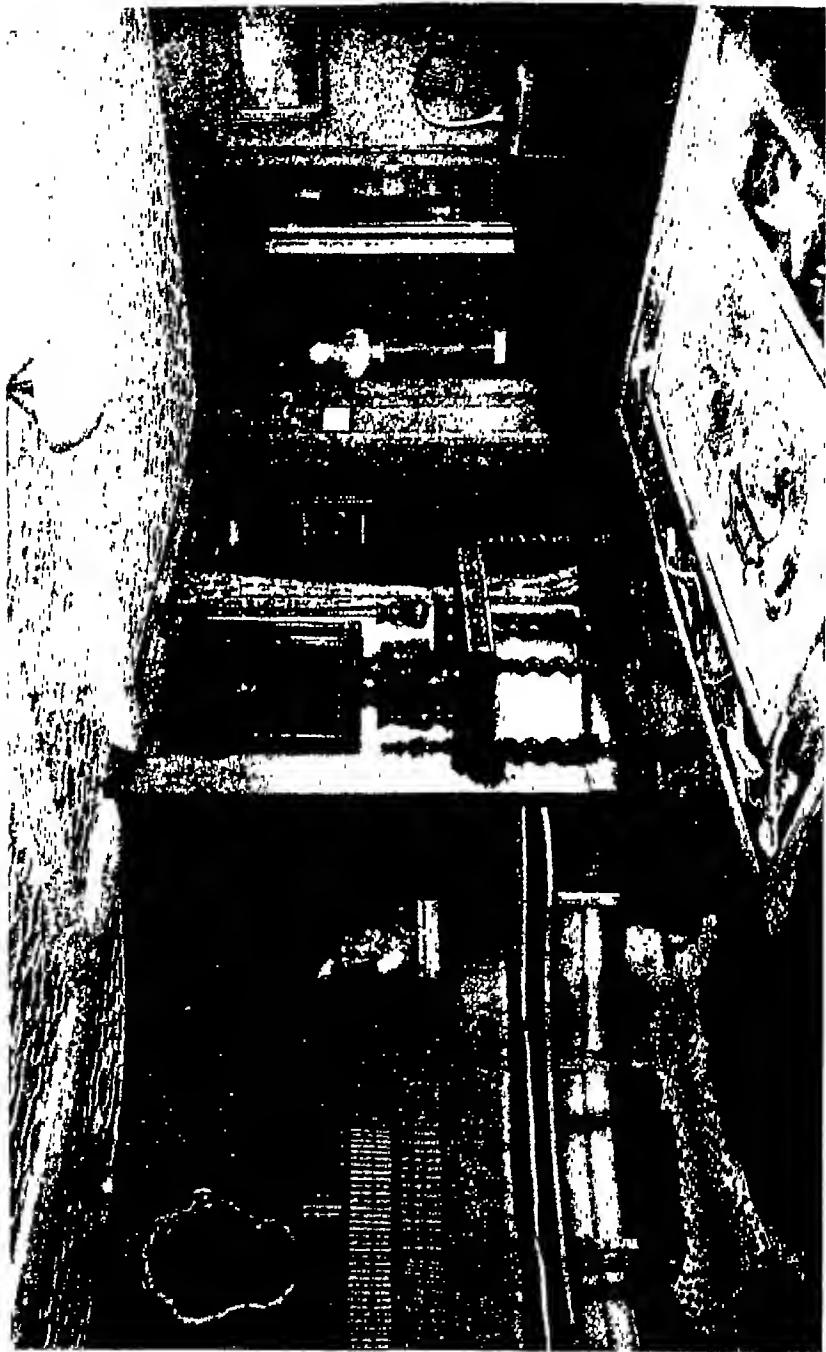
"If you listen carefully to the words of your elders and betters you will learn that we all together are given gifts worthy of the praise and adoration we offer to God, none of us is alone in his worship, we all together have a building of God. Alleluia, Praise be to God——" and then it was that the whole church began to sing in heavenly tones. All the stones cried out, all the arches rang and re-echoed—the Archangel the cherubim and seraphim gave their voices and joined in the hymn:

W^m A^r
R^{ex}



To the Duke & Duchess
of Teck
present their regards.
Mention of little
Miss Winnie will
help to offer our
very best thanks
for your kind &
affectionate
expressions contained
in this letter, and
nothing but most

as for the Sibell's
present from Switzerland
wherever she may
meet her.
Yours affly
W^m. J. G. T. 1885



THE ENTRANCE HALL, ST. ALBANS

"We altogether praise Thee O God, we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord.
All the earth doth worship Thee the Father everlasting."

After this announcement the preacher came down to earth and explained how he had become aware, in the darkening church, of the unity of all creation. He spoke of the building as a material casket of spiritual life, telling us that he read somewhere the old builders mixed their prayers with their mortar, just as some artists mix their prayers with their paint. "But," he added, "one need not go far for a solution of the problem of the beauty of Salisbury and the grandeur of York, or the majesty of Durham. They just express the spiritual feeling of their builders in the presence of the Master Builder, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone."

Certainly it was a sermon out of the ordinary and brimful of imagination and I felt the urge to put it on record in my list of Observations. We asked Mr. Knapp the following day why he christened the angels and he replied: "Because Austral is south of the arch and Boreal north." Those carved white heads have taken a new personality since they were figuratively brought to life on that Sunday morning, 26th May, a kind of birthday for the white images with their grave sweet faces bending earthwards.

I feel when people talk of the failure of the church they are picturing the many unmagnetic preachers and certain conventional clergy afraid to step out and take a line of their own. If more courage were shown, there would be fewer empty churches.

Crowded congregations throng The Old Church, Hove, in Sussex, where its vicar, the Rev. C. McDonald Hobley, holds healing services. Being a strong believer in spiritual healing and having heard much of this good vicar's powers, I was very interested in a personal experience which occurred—not when the healing circle was functioning, but at another service altogether. This is the true story:

It came to pass after a strenuous session of hard work on ailing people, our friend, the famous healer, Mr. L. Squire-Tucker, felt mentally overtired and decided to take a long week-end "off duty." He chose Brighton for this brief holiday. He says the air there always has the effect upon him of the finest tonic outside a bottle. He had certainly been "giving out" too much, for constant daily healing must in time affect the human vehicle which needs recharging and demands a rest. Instead of relaxing in the bracing climate he overwalked, and the result was a very bad attack of cramp in his leg and foot, which kept him indoors for a whole day.

He counts the Rev. McDonald Hobley, the psychic Hove vicar, as a dear friend and was eager to attend a Communion Service at which he was officiating. Being quite unable to walk except with much pain, he drove to the church and managed to take his place at the altar rail. The church was packed with people, "which," he remarked when

relating this incident, "is an unusual occurrence these days, though quite understandable when one knows the quality of the vicar's work, sound views and ministrations."

Mr. Hobley did not know that his friend was in Brighton and Mr. Squire-Tucker refrained from looking up as the consecrated bread was placed in his palm. But the vicar recognised him and laid his disengaged hand upon the bent head, asking aloud for a great blessing upon Mr. Squire-Tucker and his own healing ministry. Such an unusual break in the solemn procession along the altar-rail must have amazed the other communicants, but they little knew what was taking place.

At the touch of the padre's hand, Mr. Squire-Tucker felt, to his surprise and joy, a great wave of vital force pass right through his body, together with a spiritual uplift too sacred to be discussed. Upon rising to take his place in the pew he had vacated, he instantly discovered that all lameness and pain had gone. He had been immediately healed by the Power of the Spirit through this consecrated healer!

He walked home and has never had a twinge or any return of the cramp which is so devastatingly painful.

It is good that these two friends are in one accord with regard to healing in the churches and I am glad to learn that Mr. Hobley has requested Mr. Squire-Tucker, a layman, to officiate at his healing services when next in Brighton. Naturally he is looking forward with eagerness and gratitude to doing his part in the dear old Hove church which is such a landmark in that ancient town.

However, it will not be the first time he has had the privilege of speaking from the pulpit and healing the sick at the altar, having previously done so in Scotland, where certain congregations heartily welcomed the lay healer and did not consider it the least unconventional. I am sure that we should all be better in this rushed and busy age if we could cultivate the precious habit of meditation, which I know only too well is not easy, especially for people with very active brains. I like the little anecdote I heard concerning an old peasant who frequently sat for a long time in a Roman Catholic church, gazing at a coloured figure of our Lord. The priest, glad to see his humble parishioner engaged so long in prayer, asked him one day what he prayed about. The peasant replied simply: "I look at Him—He looks at me."

We should do well to follow that good man's example and spend more time looking at Him and letting Him look at us. It might be a lovely inward experience and help us to discover ourselves.

"Know thyself" is certainly a difficult injunction. To do so, one must be very intuitive and analytical. How many are able to carry in their souls a conviction and a certitude born of delving down into the Storehouse we call our minds!

When Mr. Knapp let out that flood of imagination in the quiet twilight, I feel he did well to give it his respectful attention and pass it on.

Those who heard his quaint account of a silent hour may in some entrancing spot surrounded with trees and flowers listen to strange conversations for themselves. Perhaps while gazing at a sunset, imagination will provide intenser joys than the ordinary pleasures of daily life.

In this chapter of "things clerical," I am reminded of an incident Sir John Squire told in an article on Robert Herrick, the poet, whose best-remembered lines are: "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may." I fear I did not know he was a clergyman, so it amused me to learn from Sir John that Herrick threw one of his sermons at the head of an inattentive woman in church. One does not picture a man who experienced such acute ecstasy over all the beauties of light, colour and form, waxing furious because a female worshipper paid scant heed to his rantings from the pulpit. We are told that his sermons, which have not survived, were full of warnings against sin and the terrors of hell.

It is strange how some of our loveliest spots in England are associated with the Devil! Old Nick has left his mark on beautiful Hindhead, that celebrated Surrey summit above Haslemere, which reaches 895 feet. Thousands who know and admire the Devil's Punch Bowl have no idea how it got that name. The story is that the Devil (like many of us) spent holidays on those bracing heights, holidays shared by Norwegian gods. He would brew for himself and these friends a strong liquid to be consumed in the Punch Bowl. The northern gods were used to strong drink, but the Devil coming from a warmer climate got so drunk, he would leap about all over the place, hence the Devil's Jump near the residence occupied by the late Lloyd George. Children, it is said, saw these jumping exploits and were frightened, so their mothers made a deputation to the great god Thor to restrain his Satanic Majesty's exciting exercises. Thor kindly obliged by taking a huge thunderbolt and throwing it at the Devil. It rolled down the Punch Bowl, set a haystack alight and a farm labourer saw the Devil rushing through the blazing stack with his tail on fire. The remedy, it is said, was efficacious, since Lucifer did not appear again in that locality for a hundred years.

Since that quaint legend was invented so many brainy people have lived in this picturesque neighbourhood, that some years ago certain scientists tried to get the name of Hindhead changed to *Mindhead*, but without success. The Devil's visit to Hindhead which I have described was at the commencement of the nineteenth century and this unpleasant person is also associated with that impressive spot in Sussex known as the Devil's Dyke. He is said to have stood on its high ridge from which he could count one hundred church spires. Naturally this was strongly distasteful to Satan, and he said—"this won't do!" So he decided to dig a deep dyke and let in the sea to submerge the churches. He commenced to dig with a huge Satanic spade, scattering earth and rock with a mighty sound. An old woman living in a hut near by heard the unaccustomed noise and lighting her rush lamp, went out to see what

was happening. Standing on the crest of the hill she held up her lamp as she peered into the night. The Devil, catching sight of this faint glimmer, thought day was breaking before its time and that the great Sun God must be on his track. Knowing he could only accomplish his task under cover of darkness, he fled away at the first sign of this mysterious dawn. So his plot failed and he left those fine green slopes which bring joy to countless tired eyes.

It is good that the churches with their hundred spires stand proudly in defiance of their old enemy the Devil. You can count them to-day from the summit overlooking the Devil's Dyke.

According to ancient tradition, Satan has a strange way of expressing himself. When he wishes to be particularly offensive, he consigns an enemy to the place he, himself, would hate to visit, saying viciously: "*Go to Heaven!*"

Perhaps I ought not to have closed my clerical chapter on the subject of the Devil, but these old legends are intriguing and my pen ran away with me. I have spoken of sermons and healers, those blessed men who remove pain and cure the sick, and then I must needs ramble on to discuss this unholy entity!

Forgive me, I can only add: From his crafts and assaults, "*Good Lord, deliver us!*"

CHAPTER XX

CLEMENT SCOTT

In writing an intimate account of Thomas Hardy in *Everybody's*, his friend, Clive Holland, tells us how the great novelist asked him suddenly if he had the choice, would he have been born?

It was certainly a startling question and one that Clive Holland found difficult to answer. He felt like saying "yes" directly, but somehow a doubt rose in his mind and he replied by putting the same query to Hardy: "Would you have been born?"

The novelist and poet, then at the height of his fame, declared without hesitation: "No, surely not."

It struck me as I read that incident this would be an interesting question to put to various types of people, as doubtless Hardy did, in order to delve into their characters and induce confidences. As a fillip to general "small talk" it might be a good card to keep up one's sleeve, a stimulating subject full of controversy to launch at a tea-party or dinner-table, if conversation flagged. This helpful rouser would stimulate thought and discussion. I shall try it on different types, the learned and

intellectual, the simple and unsophisticated, the artist and the worker, taking a mental census of their answers. I wonder what the statistical result would be! Some of my readers may do the same and receive illuminating glimpses into the minds of their friends.

Talking of delving into the minds of other people, I got a sudden insight into the mind of a great man who has long since left this sphere but will ever be remembered, that famous theatrical critic, poet and writer of charming essays—Clement Scott. In my recent Biography, I spoke of his “Garden of Sleep,” verses written for a song which was vastly popular in the days of my youth. A close friend of my parents, he frequently stayed at “St. Albans” when I was a child. He was very emotional and had the deepest admiration for my mother. She used to tell us with some amusement how she came suddenly into the drawing-room to find him kissing a painting of her which hung on the wall. In those days a kiss was a sacred and passionate thing, not the frequent friendly peck so constantly exchanged now as a mere surface greeting. He would not have thought of kissing her face in life, dear friends though they were, so I suppose the portrait was the next best thing.

Because their friendship lasted to his death, I was intrigued at finding among letters my mother had preserved a self-revealing one from Clement Scott, written in the early days of their acquaintance, in which he asks her to excuse him writing so frankly to a stranger. If my readers are as interested as I am in the working of great men’s minds, I feel they will appreciate reading this very intimate letter. Evidently Mother had sent him some sweets, saying: “don’t trouble to answer.” One feels the reply, written in his neat hand with lines as straight as if they had been ruled, gave him a sense of satisfaction. I regret it is not dated, only “Tuesday, Oct. 12. 7 o’clock.” Strange to put the hour and not the year. The letter ran as follows:

My dear Mrs. Graham,

How can I sufficiently answer you gracious courtesy and unaffected kindness? Not answer indeed when I received sweets for the taste and sweeter thoughts for the mind, remembrances and sympathies and all the things that vain men prize and appreciate. For I assure you on my honour we who write are intolerably and hideously vain. We live so much in imagination and day by day are studying the quick impulses of nature that when we behold a satisfaction we are apt to plume our feathers and to be as conceited as peacocks. This intolerable vanity is the thing to keep in subjection although the gratification of it is so extremely satisfying. We are not like actors who hear the applause eternally ringing in our ears. The reward that comes to our poor work is when we are dead and buried. We are anonymous, impersonal and nobodies. We write leading articles every day that may draw tears and touch the hearts of thousands, but five minutes afterwards they are cast aside, done with and wrap up pats of butter, old boots, or line trunks! We write our verses and satisfy ourselves in a way, we feel how we should like to do good to our

fellow-creatures and it is only on rare occasions that we ever get a whisper of appreciation. Excuse me if we are vain when Ladies of intelligence like yourself deign to consider us and cheer us with words of encouragement. If you only knew our lives, the coldness, the harshness, the cynicism, the cruelty, the jealousy and the misrepresentation that surrounds us, you would be gentle to our weakness. Good breeding and discipline are the only things that balance us. I for my part would rather be considered a fool than ultra obtrusive or affected, the training of a public school and University are great checks. We who have lived in them know the world and in this case it is better to have sacrificed the pleasure I should have experienced that sunny morning on the Hampton lawn and that sad damp evening at the Crystal Palace than to have jeopardized your friendship or your husband's respect. As for me I am a "creature of impulse," but in this case my self-denial was met with a quicker reward than I dared anticipate. Try and follow me in my work and I may do better things yet for those who are constituted as I am to write for the few, not for the many, and its applause or appreciation is an everlasting reward. You will despise me for writing so frankly to a stranger, but somehow or other your nature was not strange to me by the side of the peaceful river or in the dreamy mists of the chill autumnal fog.

Yours sincerely,

CLEMENT SCOTT.

Now reading over this letter after so long a lapse of time it is puzzling to know whether he really suffered from an inferiority complex, or was it a pretended humility to excite sympathetic interest in one whose friendship he deeply desired? I do not know to what he refers when speaking of the damp evening at the Crystal Palace, or a sunny morning on the Hampton lawn, but I do know he had not to wait till he was dead and buried to be applauded and idolised by an admiring public. It was said that the career of an actor or actress could be made or marred in a single night by Clement Scott. Frequently first night audiences applauded him when he came into the theatre. To make out he needed encouragement was certainly drawing the long bow and far from being anonymous, he was the best-known critic of his day, as well as a much-praised poet, specially beloved in a more sentimental age than our present one. When lunching at his house one day he showed me with pride a very large heavy silver cigar box, a presentation from the leading lights of the theatrical profession, the great charm of it being their signatures on its shining surface. Tears came easily to his eyes in old age and on that occasion he shed quite a few as he spoke of nearing his end in contrast to my beginning life, for then I was still in my teens and a budding author. I think he enjoyed decrying himself, because after they had become intimate friends, in writing to my mother to wish her and my father a peaceful Easter—"amongst the green leaves and the birds and the Spring flowers," he says: "You deserve to be happy because you are good. I don't because I am worthless."

The formal "yours sincerely," had changed to "yours ever," and the letter was written on Maundy Thursday, dated 1884. In it he thanked her warmly for—"a superb box of King Cups—the loveliest flowers of our Waterside Kingdom," adding: "I have to go to a theatre to-night—think of it in Passion Week!"

He was a devout Roman Catholic, and I shall always remember his dramatic funeral service. The "book of words" handed to the congregation had a photograph of him lying dead in his bed. The priest who gave the funeral oration was distinctly eloquent, turning to the coffin to address the lifeless figure within, calling to him by name: "Oh! Clement—Clement—" Those are the only words I recall, but I can hear them now as they rang out through the church.

I do not want to criticise the early letter written as a stranger, practically, to my dear mother, for I try to abide by a very sound motto:

"Survey the whole nor seek slight faults to find."

Of course that great man was to some extent a poseur and why not? Brilliant people who indulge the Arts have the right to dramatize themselves, it is a kind of poetical licence in the human make-up. Their "fans" (to use a modern word) expect it of them and are disappointed if a man or woman whose work is the rage appears just ordinary and commonplace in everyday life.

On looking back I feel Clement Scott was one of the most lovable men I remember visiting "St. Albans" in my childhood. The kingcups he adored are also my favourite flowers, perhaps because I am such a lover of water. They always speak to me of my youth on the River Thames, when they spread their golden glory in royal triumph behind tall rushes. The green banks then were a splendid playground for us children, no mean buildings with small gardens were allowed upon our islands, no factory work or smart hotels. The yellow kingcups proudly blossoming deserved their royal name. I always have a tightening of the heartstrings when I see them now, peeping from a stream in the Bushey Park coverts, or clasped in the hot hands of gipsies offering them for sale in a crowded street. I can never refuse a bunch however heavy my shopping bag and it is a joy to see them growing taller every day in a vase or bowl. Some lovers of fine hot-house blooms and choice garden flowers might call them "common things," yet to me they impart "the harvest of a quiet eye," which Wordsworth tells us we can find in "common things," that harvest which broods and sleeps in our hearts. I think they are the only wild flowers which deign to thrive indoors, but one would rather see them in shadowy streams or blooming boldly under a bright and glorious sky. I am omitting one other water flower which does not immediately wilt in a vase, that "eye of blue,"

the wild forget-me-not. You can rob a brooklet of this treasure and watch it growing taller on your table.

Many of Nature's gifts as we wander over the countryside are gems in the path of life. Above the running streams where these floral tributes flourish, there are few sights more beautiful than the dragon-fly skimming over the water and catching sunbeams on its wings. Members of the insect world are also a fascinating study. I was interested to learn that an "Insect Zoo" is a successful addition to New York's famous Bronx Zoo, where 165 different species are exhibited. When this unusual exhibit made its appearance, the attendance of interested spectators jumped to 40,000 above previous months. So that proves there are in America a good many "insect minded" people, who perhaps reverence the humble specimens of God's creation when they realise that food crops suffer yearly because of man's ignorance of these despised creatures. James Agate has called people of small intellect "insect minded." Let us hope that authors of the type who wrote the brilliant Insect Play may be equally insect minded! I know if I visit New York again I shall look in at the Zoo and find my way to the Insect House.

I have just seen an anonymous quotation in a charming Anthology called *The Pocket Trivet*, and I liked it so much I shall venture to pass it on to my readers, with its stirring advice as a chart for conduct:

"To understand but not to condone; to pity but not to patronise; to laugh but not to guffaw; to be learned but not ponderous; to love but not be maudlin about it—these are a few of life's most delicate arts."

Life is certainly a great teacher. I am always trying to learn and at my advanced age have cultivated, I think, a capacity for self-recollection, in other words, for withdrawal from the outward to the inward. This condition has been called one of useful activity, though it seems on the face of it to express relaxation and a rather lazy browsing on the pastures of the past.

Certainly constant observation is a wonderful antidote to gloomy thoughts and fills the mind with hopeful energy. I feel the secret of inward gladness and satisfaction lies in absorbing life's lessons—pictures and pleasures from whatever source lies in your path. The contrasts day by day are a study in themselves. Yesterday Theodore and I went to a most imposing gathering of Red Cross members at St. Paul's Cathedral. The occasion was a Service of Thanksgiving for the work performed by our Middlesex Branch in the Second World War. H.R.H. The Princess Royal presented the colours to the Bishop of London who consecrated them, praying: "Almighty God of His mercy to grant that He may make them to be to all those who follow them a sign of His presence in all dangers and distresses—"

It was the first occasion when it had been possible to have our personnel together in such large numbers, and it was a Red Letter Day

in the history of Middlesex. Theodore and I were fortunate in being given seats in the front row just behind the royal party and Mr. and Mrs. Attlee, these special visitors being provided with prie-dieux.

Our Commandant-in-chief, the Princess Royal, always looks particularly smart in uniform, so suitable to her upright trim figure. It was an imposing sight to see our great city cathedral packed with the uniformed figures of men and women who proudly wore the sacred emblem of the cross. The few worshippers in ordinary clothes looked strange, but I must say Mrs. Attlee had the prettiest hat I have seen this year, a delightful shape with soft white feathers of quite exquisite grace. Simple in its elegant lines, it gave charm and distinction to its wearer's features. The Dean and Canons Residentiary with the Bishop of London were gorgeous in their vestments. Very venerable and imposing they looked, making their way to the west door to greet the Princess Royal. How thankful we all felt beautiful St. Paul's Cathedral was spared to us, too ghastly if that noble structure had melted away in the fires of war!

A few seats further on we discovered General Sir George Cory and his wife. That charming man who inaugurated our local Red Cross Branch at a meeting we held at "St. Albans," in 1934, was then the President of the Middlesex Red Cross Branch and nominated me as Vice-President of the Hamptons and Teddington Division. Later we were joined to Twickenham. He left our ranks for an important post at the War Office and we were glad to see after some years of separation that he was looking just the same, or even younger. At our opening meeting here he was a bachelor, later he married and I told Lady Cory he was a credit to matrimony. Anyone could see he has a good wife, happiness was written on both their faces. We loved meeting them again and had the pleasure of motoring them back to their South Kensington Hotel. Soon we hope they will be crossing our threshold when the icy early June weather, so out of keeping with our rose-decked garden, tempts Londoners to pilgrimage here. We found time to have a good chat over old days and the intervening years seemed to roll away. War divided so many friends and acquaintances that constant reunions now peace has come seem particularly welcome.

I spoke of contrasts which we are bound to notice day by day. Two evenings after the great 5.30 service at St. Paul's, we were at a very different gathering, but one I feel is well worth recalling because it was symbolic of village life. Hampton with its wide extension is still nominally a village. Strange so large a neighbourhood should bear a name which means "a small assemblage of houses less than a town or city and larger than a hamlet." Little is left of the old rustic houses, now replaced by important streets, where villadom holds sway. We were talking of architecture the other day when Lord Hampton was having tea with us and he mentioned an amusing description of certain small residences, calling

them "skirt and blouse" houses, the lower part quite plain and the upper part all frills. But I am straying from the village of Hampton to one of our very progressive peers who bears its name. I am glad to say he never shirks attendance at the House of Lords, but conscientiously pulls his weight in the Ship of State.

Our village is dominated from a picturesque point of view as well as religiously, by the Parish Church facing the river on an incline. For fifty years it has been blessed by the faithful services of an organist who music lovers hail as a genius, Mr. J. C. Ridgway, B.Mus. The congregation and innumerable friends subscribed to give him a testimonial, as he is making his farewell bow the last Sunday in June, feeling the time has come for a well-earned rest.

Last night, 3rd June, his admirers crowded the Public Hall and a substantial cheque was handed to him, while his wife received in place of a bouquet, a handsome handbag. It was naturally very different from that cathedral ceremony I have just mentioned, but there was the same warm heart-throb in the atmosphere. It was very typical of our community, every branch of society being represented and the usual speeches from a flower-decked platform took a full hour. The speeches had much to commend them, Hampton's long history dating back to the days of Wolsey was swiftly given, showing what a number of celebrities had been drawn here throughout many reigns. Then from the mention of historical names came touches of humour, recollections of choir-boys (many passed and gone) who made rabbits of their handkerchiefs during the sermon and shot at the organ with pea-shooters, showing that our modern education has improved the manners of white-surplice youths. Well, those were light-hearted days, not like this age with its "penal taxation," an expression Lord Marchwood used in a letter to Theodore this morning.

By the same post I had a letter from a learned friend acknowledging a little gift. He seemed to specially appreciate it because it arrived on a Monday morning, which he described as "the time appointed for troubles and disappointments." Now I wonder why this idea has been implanted in the human mind? Surely Monday should be a vivacious energising day, full of hopeful promise after the refreshing rest and spiritual uplift of a well-spent Sunday. We keep birthdays. Monday should be like a birthday. We might well say "many happy returns of Monday" as we start out to face a newly born week. This same writer who is very sensitive to influences says he is thinking of the river and the unrivalled serenity of our old house.

Long may that serenity hover in the atmosphere where I feel so many spirits of the past dwell. I have been laughed at by a cynical relative for loving that word "atmosphere" so much. She thinks I rather "do it to death" and I know it is often on my lips when I visit places. I am apt to dwell on the atmosphere more than the material surroundings. After all, it is the soul of the place and contains the personality of its

inhabitants who make it unconsciously, as surely as a bird builds its nest or a spider its web. It may be a snug bed that the fledglings enjoy, or a cruel mesh which destroys. In either case it is interesting to imbibe what it conveys—carry away the beauty, or thankfully shake off the clinging evil. Atmosphere to some people means only a word which expresses the mass of aeriform fluid surrounding the earth, merely pressure of the air. They are welcome to this opinion, but I cling to my love of the word which conveys to my mind a pervading influence for good or ill. So be it!

CHAPTER XXI

A DUCAL HOUSE

THEODORE and I have recently joined "The Georgian Group," which was founded in 1937. Its aims are to rouse public interest in Georgian architecture and town planning and to give advice in regard to the preservation of Georgian buildings. If it can save from destruction and disfigurement the fine specimens of that and earlier periods, this society will do a grand work.

The Lord Derwent is Chairman, The Duke of Wellington and the Earl of Rosse act as Deputy Chairmen and the Council is composed of famous names. If these important and earnest men and women, backed up by the Group, can prevent many precious historical buildings from being wantonly destroyed, posterity will indeed owe them a debt of gratitude.

I am glad to say "St. Albans" is on their list as worthy of preservation. We tremble because plans lie at York House, Twickenham, to widen this end of Hampton Court Road which would mean pulling down our old home.

We were taken to-day, 5th June, with a party of the Richmond Georgian Group, arranged by Mrs. Stirling (who was the Countess of Elgin before she married her present husband), to see over the Duke of Northumberland's magnificent mansion, "Syon House," Isleworth. On the 12th of this month its owner will marry the Lady Elizabeth Montagu-Douglas-Scott at Westminster Abbey, and this coming event seemed to cast a romantic glamour over the tour. The bridegroom-to-be, with his mother and fiancée were tucked away in a part of the house not on view, but I feel sure we all sent the happy couple a good wish as we entered the majestic structure and wandered through the great edifice which held such priceless treasures. I noticed a particularly ascetic looking pale-faced young priest who spoke to no one and appeared to be in a dream of meditation. I pictured him recalling that this great

stone edifice was built on the site of a monastic church, that "Syon House" was originally both a convent and a monastery. So wraith-like was he in appearance, he might have been a reincarnation of one who dwelt there before the dissolution of this religious house. I said to the artist, Harry Jonas, a great Catholic painter, who came with Miss Wrenne Jarman: "Wouldn't you like to paint him?" "I would rather paint you," was the polite reply, a fulsome compliment prettily put. I saw he was taking in every detail of decoration with his artist's eye and we both specially admired the large medallion paintings of all the Earls of Northumberland in succession, with other distinguished personages of the noble houses of Percy and Seymour, in the great gallery, which serves for a library. This apartment is one hundred and thirty feet in length and the bookcases are formed in recesses in the wall so that the beautifully bound volumes become a part of the general furnishing of the room. The medallions crown the books just beneath the ceiling, which is richly adorned with paintings and other ornaments.

The lightness and elegance of the scheme is extremely fascinating and the view from a long row of windows facing those impressive volumes adds the last touch of enchantment. It was pleasant to turn from fine examples of stucco-work and other remains of antiquity, to gaze upon stately trees not made by hands and the green slopes which lead to the river. On that particular afternoon the vast distance was enhanced by a glorious blue sky.

Our guide was Sir Charles Reilly, the famous Emeritus Professor of Architecture at Liverpool University, whose new town planning, "The Reilly Plan," may change the face of England. He ushered us into a small room which made a strange contrast to the enormous apartments we had just passed through and informed us it was called "the proposal room." It would have made a snug retreat for a declaration of love, with its restful Chinese wallpaper exquisitely painted by hand and long mirrors also hand-painted in the same delicate Chinese fashion. A blue-eyed officer in khaki with his tall fiancée edged their way through the sightseers to get a glimpse of the little gem with the interesting name.

Much as one may admire "Syon House," I fancy most of us would prefer to actually live in something more home-y.

In a spacious antechamber of unique magnificence the floor is of scaglioli while the walls are in fine relief with their gilded trophies, but its most distinguishing ornaments are twelve large columns and sixteen pilasters of verde-antique, containing, it is said, a greater quantity of this scarce and precious marble than in any building in the world.

The huge unclothed statues in the entrance hall and other apartments create a formidable and awe-inspiring atmosphere. They look down on puny humanity as if to say we shall live on long after your flesh and blood bodies have crumbled to dust. I should like to have folded back some pages in the book of centuries and seen these surroundings when monks

and nuns, priests, deacons and lay brethren lived there in simplicity. The convent, founded by Henry the Fifth in 1414, and the monastery which Edward the Sixth granted to Edward Duke of Somerset, must have presented a very different picture from the superb palace built out of its ruins which is "Syon House" to-day.

I am sure that members of the Richmond Georgian Group were grateful to Mrs. Stirling for organising such an interesting afternoon. She has the good fortune to live in a beautiful Georgian house, "The Wick," which commands that majestic view of the Thames Valley, so well known from Richmond Hill. It was built in 1775 for Elizabeth, Lady St. Aubyn, of St. Michael's Mount, in Cornwall, by Robert Mylne, who Miss Jarman informed me was eleventh in succession of his family to be architect and master mason to the Kings of Scotland.

When at our first meeting Wrenne Jarman came to interview me for her series of articles in *The Richmond and Twickenham Times*, called "Silhouettes," I looked on her as a clever journalist. I have since learnt that this pretty girl has made a reputation as a poet. She prefers to be connected with this talent more than any other and is incidentally a great-great-granddaughter of Robert Millhouse, the Sherwood poet, whose memorial bust is next to Byron's on the terrace of Nottingham Castle.

I expect she received some inspiration for a poem after our romantic pilgrimage through "Syon House" and its fairylike grounds.

On this expedition we had the pleasure of fetching in our car a talented playwright, the Hon. Mary Packington, who lives with her brother, Lord Hampton, at Strawberry Vale, Twickenham. Their house is suitably named "Old Stables." This attractive residence with its garden to the Thames was once a stable of goodly proportions, which has now been converted into a delightful house for humans instead of horses. It must be a joy for Lord Hampton and his sister, who are both unmarried, to have room on those high walls to display their magnificent full-length family portraits, artistic reminders of a long ancestry.

There, in quiet peaceful surroundings, Mary Packington works and I am not surprised her plays are so successful. They act as well as they read, which is saying a great deal, since the technique is not always equally balanced. Many descriptive writers who attempt plays have not the power of bringing their characters into real-life focus behind the footlights. She possesses artistic execution and technical skill of a high order.

Talking of her work while we were at "Syon House," Wrenne Jarman told me that Miss Packington's play quaintly named "The House with the Twisty Windows," is cited as the model one-act play. I have just read a play of hers in one act, entitled "The Black Horseman." It is full of drama and suspense, and would prove an admirable choice for clever amateurs, as it carries you along with the ease which conceals stern endeavour. I felt that its author enjoyed creating the black horseman,

that formidable bogey which old Granny Drew, in her cottage on the moors, believes to be the Devil riding on the wind. Often amateurs are short of men players; this has seven characteristic parts for women and a leading rôle for the horseman, with one short part for a constable. The moral is excellent and I look forward to reading many more of Miss Packington's plays and seeing them acted. She lent me her *Arnold's Tower*, in type, the action of this three-act play takes place just after the present war. It has an eerie atmosphere and deals with reincarnation in a masterly way. "The ghosts of our old selves," to quote one of the characters, is a much-discussed theme to-day, so when one of Miss Packington's actors declares he is convinced that unreasoning loves and hatreds are rooted in some past life, a large part of the audience will undoubtedly agree with him. The end is tragic and the curtain falls on a death scene. Her work is deservedly popular with Repertory Companies.

I think when we dropped her at the gates of "Old Stables" on our return from Isleworth and she entered that house which is a real home, she must have felt as I did when I alighted in our garage and walked through the garden bordered by running water, that there is a good deal to be said for smaller dwellings!

From certain whispers we learnt at "Syon House" that even a ducal establishment has to face difficulties in regard to domestic servants. The kindly duke had gone to some trouble to get those show apartments ready for our inspection and I inwardly shivered at hearing that they have no central heating there. It is as well for those like ourselves who do not own palaces that we are happily contented with lesser house-room. I felt it was a thousand pities "Syon House" was not built nearer the river to afford a view of it from the windows. Others less devoted to water might not agree with me.

I have just been studying the history of the River Thames in a grand old book of mighty proportions published in 1796. Its large bold print is good to read and a contrast to modern printing, though our printers, binders and paper-makers have worked nobly to keep us supplied with literature during the past difficult years. All honour to them with war restrictions and peace problems harassing trade as never before!

Beautiful coloured plates in this delectable old book show how neighbouring mansions built on a gentle rise boast handsome lawns which border the water's edge and do not conceal the flowing stream too far removed from "Syon House." Give me the "Silent Highway" with its accompaniment of weeping willows, remarkable for their beauty, every time. When a magnificent reach of the Thames presents itself, why should its graceful passage be hidden from any notable residence owning grounds that glorify its journey to the sea?

When we swim through these tempting waters and paddle our canoe on the sunny surface, it is not easy to picture those same currents—say at Sheerness—where Father Thames receives the Medway after a course

of sixty miles. From there the rapid stream delivers itself into the wide ocean after pilgrimaging through woody banks, old English hamlets, marshland and friendly fortifications built for its protection. It often strikes me as strange how many globe-trotters of pre-war days, widely versed in the history of other countries, seem almost strangers to the beauty of England. Many Londoners are too disinterested even to explore places as near as Petersham and Ham with their wealth of history. Let me beg them while they have sufficient strength to wander over the Surrey Hills and penetrate to the nearer parts of Hampshire and the uplands of Berkshire, all so accessible from England's capital. An old poet begs us to "walk the smiling mead and court the forest glades or wander wild amid the waving harvests." He has called our lovely Palace "royal Hampton's pile." I will say Londoners do not neglect Hampton Court Palace, but arrive in their thousands by river, car and train. Personally, I am a poor walker and prefer swimming, though there is a fascinating sound about the poet's injunction to "wander wild," two words which would make a good title for a naturalist's book—alliteration always appeals to me.

Unfortunately, not being a hardy annual able to enjoy swimming all the year round, I have to reserve it as a summer luxury and content myself with an unfailing routine of physical exercises.

It would never have struck me to buy a book just published, entitled *Be Beautiful*, by Jean Cleland, if my favourite reviewer Sydney Carroll in *The Daily Sketch* had not praised it so highly, advising every woman to read the chapter on poise.

The authoress has a nation-wide reputation as a beauty editress, one sees her name in numerous periodicals catering for feminine interests, but I did not obtain a copy of this daintily bound volume for the sake of its hints on face treatment, hair curl, eye sparkle, etc. I skipped the pages devoted to fighting the lines of age with anti-wrinkle cream, padding and moulding, etc., nor did I spend a moment over her elaborate "make-up chart," though the names of various chapters are intriguing: "Smile and be beautiful," "One chin is better than two," etc.

The pages I devoured with alacrity described exercises for all parts of the body and that invaluable treatise on "poise and grace." One thing I found so stimulating that I should like to pass it on because it clings to my mind and is with me in my going out and coming in. To achieve perfect balance stand erect and pull in the hips and thighs, imagining that a straight line is passing up from the floor, through your body and head, to the ceiling. This I tried and the straight line has become my daily companion. I almost see it like a bright wand and can well believe the authoress when she tells us that one of the greatest authorities on beauty of figure declares any woman can look at least a stone lighter within two minutes by this simple method. And why not men also? Books are written to enable women to be attractive, I feel our brothers

are badly left out in this respect. Who will be brave enough to publish a book and call it "*Beautiful Man*"?

To turn from the glamorous to the drab, a clergyman told us he heard a very depressed woman in a bus saying to her companion: "I don't think life is worth living these days—do you?" He could not hear what her friend answered but said if she had put the question to him his reply would have been: "Life is only worth living if you *make* it so." How good to feel this gift of existence is in our own hands!

I am finishing my chapter dealing with a ducal house and our beloved Thames on the morning of 8th June. The radio announcer has just informed us:

"This is London on Victory Day—a day of excitement and pageantry."

True, for never before in our great city has a parade of such patriotic sincerity been organised, and every loyal heart will thrill to the martial music of this Imperial cavalcade.

Alas! In the opinion of many, one thing will be wanting to make our jubilation perfect and this one thing has been forcibly presented to readers of *The Daily Sketch* in a poignant article headed:

"To Whom the Victory?"

It reminds us that in celebrating the glorious conquest of two great nations, we owe our deliverance to Almighty God. The writer believes, as millions must, that but for His divine intervention we should be fed with the bread of tears, biting the dust in humiliation and degradation.

"Pick up your official programme," he says. "Search its twenty pages from end to end. You will find a single reference to God on its front page in the motto of the kings of England:

"Dieu et mon droit."

Yes, indeed, apart from this the great deliverer is ignored. The Government which warmly sponsored the marching, the drum beating and all the worldly rejoicing, refused an appeal to set aside Sunday, 9th June, as another Sunday of Thanksgiving.

So Whit-Sunday, the Day of the Spirit, the Day of Pentecost, will come and go without any official recognition of our salvation in the Day of Battle.

This day, when devout men out of every nation under heaven "heard each in his own tongue of the wonderful works of God," would indeed have been a fitting one upon which to stress the miracle of our recent deliverance.

When I read in the Bible of "a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind which filled all the house in which Christ's followers were gathered," I cannot but recall the fact that it links up with many a psychic experience to-day. Cloven tongues of fire do not appear, nor are we weak mortals filled with the Holy Ghost, but many testify to an eerie wind which comes at times when a mystic circle is sitting for developments. I was very impressed by a happening recounted to me shortly after my



STRATFORD MILL ON THE STOUR

Near Bergholt

By JOHN CONSTABLE, R.A.

*Purchased by Mr. Walter Hutchinson for the National
Gallery of British Scenery and Pastimes which he founded*

'THE WORKSHOP.' THE AUTHOR DICTATING TO HER SECRETARY



mother's death. She was attended by a hospital nurse during her last illness whom we all loved, a bright, happy, material soul who took a deep liking to Mother and listened with interest when she told her how firmly she believed in spiritualism. This nurse stayed with her patient to the end, and, quite apart from her usual custom, as a mark of affection remained with us until after the funeral.

When next she paid us a friendly visit she said: "A very peculiar thing happened the other night. I was having tea with some friends by a cosy fire and I began to talk about your mother. We had none of us ever studied psychic matters and all were interested to hear her ideas on the subject. Imagine our amazement when suddenly, for no apparent reason, the door which was tightly closed burst violently open and a rush of wind swept through the room. We all sprang to our feet and ran outside to find the evening was absolutely calm, not a breath stirred the atmosphere. There wasn't even the slightest breeze to account for this eerie occurrence."

Her friends she declared were distinctly alarmed, but she was delighted and took it as a sign that the spirit of one she admired on earth was giving a demonstration of power to prove her presence.

I give no opinion and make no guesses, but I feel this unusual happening is worth recalling.

There is a certain "Christian Psychic Society" which follows the advice of St. Paul—to test all things which come from beyond and hold fast only that which is good."

Many study these mysteries in the face of adverse criticism and opposition. I hope they may gain enlightenment, for truths which have come through genuine mediums can to my certain knowledge change the bitter grief of mourners into happiness and peace.

CHAPTER XXII

A VILLA OF BRAINS

I WONDER if my readers have noticed how frequently clever men and women seem attracted to the same place, it may be a neighbourhood or a special building. Something in the atmosphere draws them irresistibly and I feel this is the case with "Garrick's Villa," the historical home of the great actor which I mentioned in a previous chapter. That well-known writer, Desmond MacCarthy and his wife, who entertain both young and old in their large flat on the first floor, would alone give the villa a literary flavour, but exactly beneath them another interesting couple live in a most attractive part of the building which

opens friendly doors on to the grounds. The wife, who was just about to start her career as a barrister, gave up this calling for the sake of a "learned friend" who became her husband. He is the well-known advocate V. R. M. Gattie, C.B.E., M.A., whose name appears so frequently in criminal cases. Besides being a hard worked member of the Bar, he has found time to write most fascinatingly on the subject he knows so well. I have just read a book of his which is in its seventh edition, entitled *Wills on Circumstantial Evidence*, a work widely quoted, which gives the most striking cases in recent years exemplifying the nature and force of circumstantial evidence. It is a thick volume packed full of interest to those who study crime, but not one to take to bed with you if you are subject to bad dreams! I realised to the full when sunk in its pages the awful responsibility and the dangerous power of judicial discretion. The book is the work of an exceedingly brilliant and thoughtful man with vast legal experience, and I feel proud that we can call him friend. He is a staunch supporter of the Conservative cause in this Division; we are privileged in having one so able on our committee.

Like many other great men he is simple and unassuming in private life and spends many of his leisure hours gardening in the grounds of "Garrick's Villa." His young son, Rodney, has inherited this taste, his bedroom walls are literally a blaze of coloured flowers taken from pre-war copies of *Amateur Gardening*, the effect is striking and artistic.

Trevor Allen, another clever writer, lives at "Garrick's Villa." We first met him six years ago through an article he wrote on David Garrick's life, which appeared in *John O' London's Weekly*. It gave an account of Garrick's marriage to the pretty Viennese dancer, Violette, who came to England dressed as a page—"They married in the month of roses and fragrance wafted them through the years."

This man of letters was a soldier on the Salonika front in the 1914 war and it gave him the background of his psychological murder novel, intriguingly named *Jade Elephants*. Immediately after the suicide of Ivar Kreuger, the match king, in Paris, Trevor Allen rushed off to Sweden to collect material for a biography and wrote it at stop-press speed within a month.

In a previous chapter I have mentioned life's contrasts; in his career they certainly stand out with marked distinction. During our recent war I frequently saw this active writer on patrol as an air-raid warden in the blitzes, now I catch sight of his lithe figure striding past our house on a morning walk into Bushey Park before settling down to his day's work—possibly to write a poem (for his own amusement) about the lime avenue in blossom or the blaze of rhododendrons and azalea bloom in the plantation.

I did not realise until I was enjoying a quiet talk with him one day under our giant catalpa tree, that for many years he was an unresting Fleet Street reporter and knew many notorious criminals and murderers.

He wrote the biography of a Soho crook in *Underworld*, and the Metropolitan magistrate, J. A. R. Cairns, recommended it highly as a true, convincing study of the criminal mind, in an introduction. Trevor Allen was much amused when the criminal whose life he had depicted told him he would do much better if he went into the crook business himself instead of "tapping away at that old typewriter!"

Knowing all this, with my usual curiosity and love of diving into the minds of people who "do things," I tactfully tried to draw him out about his past. I felt a man with his experience of life must have so much to tell. I wanted to know how he started his first connection with newspapers and was surprised to hear it began at the age of twelve, when he sold them round the South Kensington mews, before and after school hours, so that he could have his own pocket-money and go every week to the Chelsea Palace Music Hall, which he loved. He declared that he learnt more of life and people that way than he could ever have done from school-books and I can well believe it. Life is our greatest educational medium. The hackneyed phrase "we live and learn" must remain an undying truth to the end of time. I recalled Trevor Allen's thrilling additions to a book entitled *Famous Crimes of Recent Times*. They were retold by him in company with such famous names as Edgar Wallace, William Le Queux, Sir Max Pemberton, Sir John Hall, Herbert Vivian and Edgar Jepson. Some of these seven well-known authors have passed to the beyond, where we hope there is no sin, only peace and love.

I asked Trevor Allen to recall to my mind a few of the amazing crimes in that record of his. He ticked off on his fingers:

Jacoby—the pantry boy, who murdered Lady White in an hotel bedroom; Norman Thorne, of the Crowborough poultry farm; Browne and Kennedy, who shot P.C. Gutteridge on a lonely Essex road, and Goldenberg, who shot the Bordon Camp bank manager, etc.

I think the pantry boy's crime was one of the most peculiar. Lady White (not to be confused with our late friend, the widow of F.-M. Sir George White, of Ladysmith, who lived in "The Wilderness House," Hampton Court) lost her life because she did not trouble to lock her bedroom door at night. This is one of our infallible rules, a particular fad, if you can call it that, of Theodore's. We have great arguments with a woman friend who for fear of fire never takes this precaution against burglars. Nothing we could say would induce her to turn a key in her bedroom door before settling down to sleep, just as we should not dream of passing into slumberland without making sure our door was securely locked.

Poor Lady White, who to all seeming, as Trevor Allen says, was destined to live out a ripe old age, died from a blow on the head with a hammer when this youth crept into her room in search of money. Her assassin was the first murderer under age to be hanged in England for several years.

I only once attended a murder trial in my young days and then it was strongly against my will. Our friend the actor, Courtenay Thorpe, who was brought up in Hampton and made a name for himself on the stage in England and America, forced me to spend some miserable hours which I shall never forget. He told me excitedly that he had fortunately obtained seats in court for a most sensational trial. The accused man, Steinie Morrison, was to be tried for murder at the Old Bailey before that famous legal character, Mr. Justice Darling. Courtenay, intending to do us a great favour, offered Theodore and me two seats in court. I fear he thought me very ungrateful when I hotly declined. Theodore could go if he liked, but nothing, I declared, would induce me to sit like a ghoul watching a man being tried for his life! I also declared I thought it disgusting of women to go unless their presence was absolutely necessary to the case.

I had not reckoned with Courtenay's persuasive powers. He argued that an author should make it her business to see everything that might be of use when writing novels. Here was a thriller in real life, a performance packed full of drama and "copy." He mentioned leading actors and actresses who he knew were clamouring for admission, and said I should see many faces familiar behind the footlights following the evidence. Finally he won the day. I was over-persuaded and during my single appearance at that famous trial I endured agonies of mind. Hating every moment of it I despised myself for weakly going against my better judgment.

Now I understand why I suffered so much. In those days I had thought little about things psychic. I knew nothing of the effect of vibrations on sensitive natures. I realise I contacted in that court the terrible mind-waves of the criminal. I never took my eyes off him for a moment, his upright figure as he stood in the dock with one hand resting on his hip and the other clasped behind his back seemed to rivet me, so that I even remember the colour and cut of his clothes. It seems rather strange at this length of time, because it all took place in the spring of 1911.

I have always been thankful I was not at the Old Bailey when the jury passed the verdict of guilty, after being absent only thirty-five minutes. On hearing the man I had watched so closely was condemned to death, I felt haunted and breathed a sigh of relief when Winston Churchill, then the Home Secretary, announced, after Steinie Morrison's legal advisers appealed, that the death sentence had been commuted into one of penal servitude for life. There was no shadow of doubt that he had done this murder, and exactly ten years later he died in the infirmary of Parkhurst Prison.

People who take on the conditions of their fellow-creatures, as I am apt to do, should avoid as a form of entertainment the unsavoury surroundings of the Law Courts. I profited by my lesson and it is well for

me I never had Trevor Allen's work of writing up murder trials and interviewing criminals. Later he turned to very different subjects. I am thinking of his poignant book—*The Tracks They Trod*. It was a deeply affecting account of his pilgrimages with sorrowing relatives after the first world war, to visit the graves of the fallen. Those journeys he took to this and the other Near East fronts, Gallipoli, Palestine and Egypt, are described most graphically by this versatile writer. I am sure it must have been a harrowing experience for one who is sensitive to suffering. Time is said to heal, but I think it is merely an outward healing and the wound beneath the surface seldom loses its smart.

As a novelist I naturally look on Trevor Allen with some reverence as a reviewer! He has always been kind to my work, for having written books himself he knows the sweat and toil of their making. However faulty the production, he would rather praise than blame. He is happiest when he can interpret sympathetically a fellow-writer's work, indicating its scope and the type of reader to whom it will appeal. If he has to criticise I notice he tries to do it in a friendly, amusing way.

I think *John O' London*, *Britannia and Eve*, and other journals in which you find his name are lucky to have such an able reviewer, for he approaches each book from the broad "human interest" angle of the man of the world.

He always says when he visits us, how restful he finds what he pleases to call—"our stately Tudor room." He also admires the bookcase in the entrance hall, which contains all the specially bound volumes of my own first editions flanked by guardian angels. These two kneeling figures, carved in wood and delicately coloured, have particularly artistic robes and their raised hands are clasped in prayer. Trevor Allen's strong sense of humour made him declare once that the praying angels were saying: "Don't write any more books!" It was only to tease me, for no one could be more encouraging to my prodigious output than this good friend and neighbour.

Now I have done with the brainy men at "Garrick's Villa," I must tell you that this ground on which a great actor trod can boast as a resident the well-known actress, Miss Ruby Miller.

I first had the pleasure of meeting her at Hampton Court House, where she organised a charity garden fête for musical instruments for the troops early in the recent war. In the large ballroom a well-known medium, Estelle Roberts, gave wonderful demonstrations of clairvoyance. This started me speaking to Ruby of spiritualism and we discovered we were both firm believers in survival. Our mutual interest in psychic science led to many talks on the subject at "St. Albans." Ruby Miller shares my conviction that colour vibrations have a tremendous effect on our lives and definitely influence the health and well-being of the community. I will not speak now of the many instances in which colour has worked like magic, especially in the cure of nerves. I want to tell my

readers about the first psychic play I have seen which was produced this week on Whit-Monday for seven days at the "Q" Theatre, Kew. Performances are allowed there on Sundays in connection with the club. We went early in the week and were thrilled by this brilliant comedy, *Through The Door*, in which Ruby Miller took the leading part of a professional medium. I don't know when I have so thoroughly enjoyed a performance. In all probability, by the time this book is published, it will be running in the West End with most of the present cast.

Written and directed by Evadne Price, *Through The Door* mounts up all the way, not for one instant does the interest flag. From first to last the audience is kept guessing and the psychic effects are truly intriguing. The author creates a keen atmosphere of suspense and curiosity, dexterously mixing murder and humour, so that her ingenious plot caters for every taste.

Ruby Miller is a perfect choice for the fascinating medium who holds thrilling séances in her private house. I am not surprised that Evadne Price would hear of no one else to take this exacting part but her friend Ruby, whose acting is quite outstanding.

There is something behind all this which the general public do not know and I am privileged to give them a peep behind the scenes. Ruby Miller is not merely interested in psychic science, she is a medium herself, so much so that when she sits in the cabinet on the dark stage she has to be very careful not to go into a trance.

Evadne Price, watching the fine acting of Ruby as "Madame Barrymore," must have recalled a remarkable demonstration of spiritualistic power which took place between them during the last war. Evadne had not heard of her husband, Ken Attiwell, who was serving overseas, for eighteen months. All her letters and cables to him were returned and she had almost given up hope that he could be in the land of the living, when Ruby was able to relieve her terrible anxiety by absolutely assuring her he was alive and well and a prisoner of war in Japan.

How did Ruby know this, we naturally ask? She says she obtained the information which proved perfectly accurate by going out of her body into the fourth dimension, where she was able to see him clearly and give the correct details to his anxious wife.

No wonder Evadne Price looks on Ruby as somewhat superhuman!

Scoffers (and their name is legion) may jeer and sneer at this true story, but even unbelievers must admit that facts are facts! A psychic happening is linked up with the welcome presence of Jack and Daphne Barker in the cast of *Through The Door*.

Daphne, Jack Barker's wife, is Ruby Miller's niece, and the outstanding success these two young people have made in cabaret has always been a satisfaction to her. They perform at the smartest West End restaurants and have frequently been honoured by Princess Elizabeth's presence during their "act."

Miss Miller's sister, Olive, mother of Daphne Barker, passed on in July 1939. Her spirit came through to Ruby and announced she was most anxious for her daughter Daphne and Jack, her son-in-law, to play on the legitimate stage. She said she would help Ruby to accomplish this for them.

The manager of *Through The Door* scoured London in an attempt to cast the parts of Nick and Dolly, but failed after months of trial. The play subsequently reverted to the author who agreed with Ruby that the two young Barkers of cabaret fame were perfectly suited to these parts.

Evadne Price and Ruby proved to be good "Spotters." The selection was made and Daphne's "dead" mother gained her wish. Charming Mr. and Mrs. Jack Barker are really splendid in this psychic thriller. They must be pleased with their success, but not more so than their aunt who fulfilled her sister's wish sent from the invisible world.

Through The Door is a proof that great cabaret stars can also prove great actors.

I went to congratulate Ruby on her performance after the play and found Daphne Barker sharing her aunt's dressing-room. This clever young artiste was busily making up for a fresh rôle, as she was due back in London to fulfil a late cabaret engagement in the West End with her husband. Earlier that day Mr. and Mrs. Barker were on the radio; truly a busy couple and much in request.

There was the fragrant scent of roses in that room from our "St. Albans" garden and I asked Ruby why real flowers were never allowed in vases on the stage. She said the superstition started because very often they wilted in the heat and shed their petals during an act, when unfortunate performers had been known to slip up on them and injure their ankles.

Theatrical superstitions cling hard, like the infallible one that the good fairy in the pantomime always enters from the right side of the stage and the demon from the left. No producer would dream of altering this rule or he would feel the show was doomed.

Life behind the footlights, so beloved by its devotees, is one I have never envied. The mental strain must be enormous and the short run of a promising play which, apparently for no fault of its own or its interpreters, fails to draw the public, is often heart-rending. I always feel there is bathos in the theatrical expression "resting" for an actor or actress out of work. The term implies a delightful pause with pleasurable freedom from everything that wearies or distresses. Only too frequently "resting" artistes are far from enjoying peaceful tranquillity. They may be straining every nerve to find fresh fields in which to exploit their talents, haunting agent's offices or besieging managers who have to send them away empty. So the word "resting," glibly coined, must often jar on the nerves of those who are aching for activity.

Apart from this angle, what a lovely word it is, especially if you link it to the nightly passing away from temporary troubles in sleep. That word in itself creates visions for the mind—"I slept like a top!" At once you picture humming-tops at the acme of their gyration, so steady and quiet they do not appear to move. Then suddenly comes a change, the top totters and drops in the same way that the sleeper falls from blissful unconsciousness to the reality of life.

As a child I loved the story of *Sleeping Beauty*; the French version *La Belle au Bois Dormante*, by Charles Perrault, is I think quite charming. The Beauty shut up by enchantment in a castle sleeps a hundred years, during which time an impenetrable wood springs up around. How I thrilled in my young days when the Prince ultimately disenchanted her! Another fairy tale on somewhat the same lines has a mysterious fascination, the fable of Epimenides, the Cretan poet, who went to fetch a sheep and after sleeping fifty years continued his search and was surprised to find when he got home that his younger brother was grown grey.

Sleep is so glorious that one could write a volume on its charms. In its embrace, age, care and sorrow cease. Cicero records a saying of Themistocles:

"Teach me the art of forgetting; for I often remember what I would not and cannot forget what I would."

Sleep teaches that art. "It covers a man all over, thoughts and all, like a cloak," so Miguel de Cervantes tells us, "it is meat for the hungry, drink for the thirsty, heat for the cold and cold for the hot."

What more can you ask than that!

Talking of rest, I must mention the best of all, for I do feel the truth of the words: "It is a grand thing to die." We all know we are coming to "dear bounteous death, the jewel of the just." In the general acceptance of the word I am convinced there is no death, I know that death is not to be feared any more than his brother sleep.

We who are actors on the stage of life, when we pass "through the door," will be "resting" in the real sense of the word!

CHAPTER XXIII

WATERWAYS AND THE MUSCOVITE WIZARD

I WAS gazing out of a window at "St. Albans," my eyes as usual fixed on the river, when my sister Evelyn came up and looking in the same direction at the passing stream, said:

"Has it struck you, Winnie, what remarkable changes we have seen in the life and fashion of the Thames since we lived here as children?"

We can throw our minds back to another era, when things were so different that many young people to-day have never even heard of them. Now take 'towing' for instance——"

The words brought back in a flash a long-forgotten pastime.

"Why, of course," I replied, "people never tow their boats now and what fun it was!"

A vision rose in my mind of smart skiffs complete with mast and tow-line, skimming over the water. The favourite small picnic party was generally made up of two men and two girls, who towed in couples. A man and a girl sat in the stern, one steering with a rudder rope tucked under each arm, while the two on the bank walked leisurely along, chatting as they leant upon the bar to which the towing-line was fixed. Such a grand opportunity for the exchange of confidences! Many a romance, I am sure, started on the tow-path in those days. The rôle of "human horse" really needed little exertion, yet the boat appeared to move quite swiftly, a smooth delightful motion, soundless except for the gentle ripple of the water.

Each couple naturally did the walking and steering in turns and as many of these excursions lasted the whole day, the exercise on the towing-path was not unwelcome.

Then there were always towing-men waiting about on the river bank, eager to be hired. In fancy I can hear them shouting to boats with heated scullers:

"Have a line on, sir? Have a line on, lady? Only a shilling an hour——"

When boating parties succumbed to the pleading voice and relaxed on cushioned seats to enjoy the dreamy movement, they had the pleasure of feeling at the same time they were doing a charity.

In those days people never spent the night in covered boats tied to islands, nor were there any tents pitched on the towing-path, which now affords a temporary lodging for holiday-makers. These tiny erections spring up like mushrooms generally for a week-end and look hardly large enough to contain human beings.

"And then," said my sister, "do you remember the gipsies when the Hampton races were on and the wonderful somersaults the girls did on the towing path?"

Of course it all came back. The "'Appy 'Ampton races," as they were called, on the open heath before Hurst Park Racecourse enclosed that wide space and the caravans with their dark-eyed maidens came no more. Those gipsy girls did quite a fine trade on the towing path. Bare-footed, they ran along keeping pace with the boats, turning head over heels in quick succession with marvellous skill. They wore long flowing skirts which whirled gracefully through the air and money was constantly thrown to them from amused spectators on the river. This wild performance went on most of the day. It always amazed my father, who

used to do cartwheels on the lawn to entertain us children, that these dexterous gipsies managed their skirts with so much propriety. There was nothing in the performance to shock the Victorian woman who so scrupulously concealed her legs.

I have just seen in to-day's *Daily Mirror* (June 19th) a picture of screen star Phyllis Calvert turning cartwheels in her Gloucestershire garden. Ann Auriel, her small daughter, is clumsily trying to imitate mother, while her husband watches with an expression of amusement. What a contrast her neatly cut slacks are to the voluminous long skirts worn by those amazing gipsy women who infested the towing-path and filled their pockets with pence thrown from boats.

People sang much more when boating at night in those days. Voices sound their best on the river and often long after we had gone to bed, in the early hours, river-lovers were still afloat making merry and singing from lightness of heart.

As Evelyn and I looked out through that window and resurrected a world linked to our childhood, she drew a word-picture which brought back a youthful thrill.

"In the midst of our lessons," she said, "we occasionally heard in the distance the sound of a fine orchestra playing on the river and that in itself was a novelty in those days. I was always the first to spring up and rush to the window, calling out excitedly: '*Maria Wood! Maria Wood!*' You, Winnie, followed immediately with our foreign governess and the three of us stood in breathless expectation waiting for the appearance of an immense decorated barge being slowly towed upstream by strong well-groomed horses. It was the *Maria Wood* in all her glory of bright paint, brilliant awning and flower-adorned deck, where beautifully dressed ladies sat in lounge chairs talking to smartly attired gentlemen in tall hats!"

The *Maria Wood* was the stately background for a big party, generally organised by one of the City companies. Huge baskets of food piled in the stern testified to the forthcoming banquet in the spacious cabin below. As she travelled slowly this magnificent craft, which seemed to have all the glory of a royal barge in historical times, gave us the opportunity of admiring its every detail. How different from the swift motor launches and nimble cruisers of to-day! On fine week-ends we see quantities of every type. This river traffic affords much entertainment and a feast for the eye, especially to visitors who do not live on the banks of the Thames or are strangers in these parts.

Another flash-back of memory recalls the days when gramophones first made their appearance and were the favoured possessions of the few.

A large houseboat, *The Gipsy*, which Theodore bought in the first world war, originally belonged to the late Mr. Bradford. It was moored to Tagg's Island on the main stream and its first owner became a public benefactor. Night after night he freely entertained a vast concourse of

people on the river and the towing-path opposite. He had a gramophone with an exceedingly large horn like a loud-speaker and gave evening concerts which came to be known far and wide. Boats of every kind, punts, skiffs, canoes, dinghies, swarmed in front of his houseboat, which was illuminated with hundreds of electric lights and Chinese lanterns. This mass of river craft with their listening parties remained stationary for hours, except when steamers or barges disturbed them and a way had to be made on the solidly blocked stream for their passage up to Sunbury or down to Molesey Lock.

This free entertainment continued for many summers, until the island proprietor, Fred Karno, discovered it drew away customers who might otherwise have landed to dance and spend money at his hotel.

Mr. Bradford was then told he must stop giving these concerts or remove his houseboat. It was such a beloved hobby of *The Gipsy's* kindly owner that it quite broke his heart. He decided to sell the houseboat and get right away from the scene of his popular success. His absence was deeply regretted by countless unknown friends and admirers.

In those days music was a much rarer treat than now, when famous musicians can be heard in the humblest cottage and radio makes us so "sound-conscious," educating the young to appreciate the classics.

Personally I never think music given through any machine is quite the same as the direct personal rendering. This was brought home to me the other day when Mr. and Mrs. Cadell (Helen and Laurie to us) brought a famous violinist to tea and he arrived, to our surprise, armed with a violin.

He was the celebrated Pole, Stanislax Frydberg, whose life is like a chapter from a novel. He is a striking instance of dual vocation, being a brilliant lawyer as well as a musician who first made a great impression in England in 1934, and previously gave sixty concerts in Germany in aid of the unemployed.

In Moscow this great artist studied both music and law and only escaped execution at the hands of Soviet Russia because of his beautiful playing to fellow-prisoners sentenced to death, like himself, for political offences. When waiting daily for death in a dungeon, he vowed if deliverance came he would use his talents for charitable purposes whenever possible. This he does and his one idea seems to be to give his fellow-creatures pleasure.

I love to hear the violin "all on its own," unaccompanied by a piano or any other instrument, so when our tea guest offered to play for us, I knew we should have an unexpected treat. He selected the drawing-room as being the highest room in the house and so the best for sound. There he gave forth all the verve and passion of his genius, declaring he had never played so well and that his one ambition that day was to make me cry!

Indeed it was different from sitting stiffly in a row at an arranged recital, the intimate touch and informality held a charm difficult to explain.

His deep-set blazing eyes make artists want to paint him and they often do so while he is playing. It interested me to see the expression which came over his wife's face as she listened to his music. The mother of a grown-up family, she seemed to go back to her girlhood and her features became absolutely transformed. Afterwards he told me she was his greatest inspiration and critic. The daughter of a former A.D.C. to the Tsar, she has braved the ups and downs of a stormy period of history, through which the "Muscovite Wizard," as her husband has been called, played his way triumphantly. I have read a number of Press notices which praise him to the skies. One eulogy by a German critic of old days says: "Where else have we witnessed such mastery of the bow? He holds all under his spell . . . one of the few 'beloved of the gods' who through their art conquer the world and beyond that their heaven on earth."

In the wealthy days in Russia this many-sided Polish musician kept his own racing-stables and as he was passing through our hall he paused before the picture of a beautiful racehorse by Herring. A man in a tall black hat and frock coat is standing holding the reins with the colourful jockey at his side.

Theodore had hitched to the frame of this picture a pair of Fred Archer's spurs, which were sold for charity at an auction we got up in the 1914 war.

The moment Stanislax Frydberg realised this was a trophy of the great jockey Archer, he exclaimed:

"Wouldn't Lady Hastings like to have those spurs! She collects everything she can in connection with him."

So sure was he of her interest that Theodore said he would willingly give them up and accordingly wrote to Lady Hastings at Melton Constable Park, Norfolk, offering her this little memento. To-day he has received her reply, dated 24th June, in which she gladly accepts the gift, telling him that Fred Archer was her father-in-law's jockey in the Derby of 1885. She has the colours he rode in, his whip and an oil painting of him at Melton. She seems surprised that Theodore can spare the spurs and says: "Are you certain you would not prefer to keep them?"

In speaking of our mutual friend she writes:

"Professor Frydberg is a wonderful violinist, I enjoyed his playing more than words can say."

So did I, and I also enjoyed some astonishing stories his wife told me of her psychic experiences and how she had talked to a friend who called at her house, little dreaming he had died a few hours previously.

She told me she saw several spirit people in our drawing-room while her husband was playing and her description of them in no way surprised

me. I should like to have heard more, but the Cadells had arranged to take their friends to Hampton Court Palace where a concert was being held in the Orangery. They unfortunately did not see the famous gardens under very good conditions, for rain fell as they drove away.

Mr. Frydberg declared he would come again on a sunny day and play his violin beside the river under our catalpa tree. I told him he must come when it is in full bloom, for it really is a sight, every bough smothered with showers of blossoms like thousands of small orchids on stems the size of flowering chestnuts.

Strangers on the river come to see it year after year, though only too often its breathless beauty is blown to earth by the heavy winds dealt out by our cruel summers. In one of the recent war years a cyclone came all in a moment and the ground beneath looked as if it were thickly covered with snow. We were having tea in the garden on a long strong table under the trees and the cloth was lifted up and everything went west, including a large jug of milk. I recall this incident because it was Saturday and my banal thought was : "What shall we do for Sunday's milk?"

Certainly it would be idyllic to hear such a sensitive artist playing by the riverside. He gave his first concert in Lodz when he was ten years old, which seems to prove the old saying that "geniuses are born—not made."

I received a most gracious letter from him saying he had enjoyed his visit to "St. Albans" and, declaring that sweet words should be accompanied by a sweet gift, he enclosed a pound packet of "Tate and Lyle Cube Sugar," a most welcome addition to the store cupboard.

I wonder now that tennis at Wimbledon has begun again if the players will go back to their pre-war habit of sucking a lump of sugar to give them energy during a brief rest. The large lettering on my packet—"Save this Carton for Salvage"—is a reminder that we are still waging war against many shortages, a doleful legacy of the years the locusts have eaten!

More than once in his conversation Frydberg repeated a motto which is worth remembering and acting upon, evidently it was the keynote of his life;

"If you haven't what you like—
You must like what you have."

Perhaps we all have a favourite motto. One I try to live up to is: "Those can conquer who believe that they can."

Never has life been more exciting to those who like to live dangerously than to-day, when one scientist has actually declared he is determined to travel to the great planet Mars and to take parties there. He assures his adventurous passengers who are clamouring to be the first to go

that he will be able to bring them back safely. If this is ever accomplished, how they will enjoy detailing their experiences!

Sidney Dark, whom I used to meet in my young days when he was a pillar of strength at the *Daily Express* office, has just told the public he is seventy-two and declares life may remain a gay adventure when one has become old, but only if the adventurer's spirit is retained.

I should think his career certainly required an adventurous spirit. One need not be a traveller to walk perilous paths. To guide the course of a great newspaper is hazardous in the extreme.

Home work, and especially the work of the nursing profession, is often a perilous one. I marvel at the utter disregard these brave nurses show where infection is concerned.

Miss E. Cockayne, the Matron at the Royal Free Hospital, Gray's Inn Road, London, was preaching in one of the wards on Hospital Sunday, and in testifying to her faith in God and her reliance on prayer, she said:

"If we worry we do not trust—
If we trust we do not worry."

The Epistle for that day was appropriately taken from St. John's words on love:

"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God and everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love."

I thought how well that linked up with the great profession of healing and hospital work throughout the world.

The paradox about love is that "the more we give it away to others the more we have left." I do not know whose words I am quoting, but they are not mine. If doctors and nurses who have to brave infection harboured fear, they could not continue their unselfish vocation. An old Egyptian fable admirably illustrates this truth. It tells of an Arab pilgrim who met the Plague and asked him where he was going.

"To Baghdad," was the reply, "to kill 5,000 people."

Some time later the pilgrim met the Plague returning and said:

"I thought you were going to Baghdad to kill 5,000 people, and lo! you have slain 50,000."

"Not so," the Plague replied, "I slew only the 5,000, the rest died of fright!"

A friend who heard me tell that fable to some of my Red Cross Cadets said: "You know, it's quite true. I have been in a plague epidemic and fear accounted for more deaths than the disease."

Those terrified people thought they would catch the fatal germ and their thoughts destroyed them in thousands, which only proves what a creative force thought can be. I am convinced it is the most potent factor

in our lives. Thoughts on a high level of sympathetic understanding bring healing and on the opposite scale, destruction.

The simple philosophy handed down to us in that famous Biblical anthology of Gnomic poetry "The Proverbs" says:

"For as he thinketh in his heart—so is he."

I rather fancy those are the truest words ever given to mankind.

Have you sometimes said: "Oh! I'm so tired," and then added quickly: "I won't think I am tired"?

If not, just try it and perhaps you may stumble upon some magic unawares.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE MARCH OF THE YEARS

ONE of our chief delights in this first year of peace is meeting many old friends who entirely vanished during the ghastly war period.

Acquaintances were scattered in all directions and friendships faded out temporarily through lack of contact. Some people were wonderfully faithful and kept in touch under difficulties, but many I felt had quite forgotten us.

Now that 1946 has brought a crowd of cars back to the road, the most unexpected arrivals stop at "St. Albans," where they know they will receive a warm welcome.

Lady Butterfield, whom I had not met since many years before the war, came to call on us with Lady Twining from Hampton Court Palace. She kindly said: "Hampton is Winifred Graham to me," and it appeared she had been reading my books and getting certain comfort from them during her sojourn in America. I was touched to learn that she even recalled my existence and her affectionate greeting was a happy surprise.

"I don't know how long it is since you were here," I said, "but I remember your coming with your young daughter, who wore her fair hair in two long plaits. She must be grown up now."

Lady Butterfield laughingly replied:

"I must write and tell Carolinda you remembered her plaits. She is twenty-three years old and a member of the New York Bar, making £2,000 a year as a solicitor, and she is married."

I confessed I had forgotten her unusual Christian name. Lady Butterfield put her aunt's name Carol and her mother's name Linda together and christened her baby Carolinda. The Caro means "dear" and Linda means "beautiful" in Portuguese, so it stands for "the dear beautiful

one," who turned out to be not only dear and beautiful, but unusually clever and athletic. At fifteen years of age she played on ice in the All England hockey team and was three times swimming champion of Northern France.

Lady Butterfield has done grand national work during the war years. She founded a society called: "Children of the Fighting Forces," an adventure in Anglo-American friendship, and placed over 30,000 letters between American and British children. They described their home town, its industries and historical interests, with any titbits they liked to add about school and home life.

Pen-friends received lovely Christmas toys from America, which were exhibited at Newcastle upon Tyne and viewed by some 38,000 people.

I asked Lady Butterfield if she intended living still at her Yorkshire home, Cliffe Castle, Keighley. She shook her head and explained that a place of that size—with forty bedrooms—was no joke in the winter! To keep the central heating going, two large furnaces are required, and how can such luxury be obtained in these days of coal rationing? I didn't wonder she wished to desert this ancestral mansion which is bound to become terribly damp without its furnaces stoked to full strength. It is the same with many homes which suffer from our much discussed domestic difficulties. Only too many alas! must be abandoned for three outstanding reasons—staff, heating and income tax, though it is surprising how many wealthy ones appear able to stand up to the latter and enjoy life as of old!

Take the Riviera for instance, I hear it is packed with sun-worshippers flocking back to its shores. During our recent rainy June I received tantalising letters describing the joys of bathing in that ultramarine blue sea and the hundreds of prostrate figures lying prone on the sands, their bodies the colour of mahogany. The hotels are doing a roaring trade and money is spent like water. After reading eight sheets from a South of France enthusiast who described the sailing boats, surf-riders and many gaieties, I closed my eyes and pictured the restful scene beyond those crowded pleasure-grounds of sea and shore. In imagination I gazed at the distant Esterelles, lovely heights the colour of ripe grapes, with buildings gleaming brightly miles away, like toys on the mountain-side. I wondered how many revellers in those hotbeds of fashion at Cannes, Monte Carlo, and other gay resorts, pause to utter a prayer of thankfulness that a world so recently drenched in blood has left them these lovely scenes.

Noel Fisher, our friend, who with Somerset Maugham and countless others escaped in a crowded coal boat at the beginning of the war, writes:

"You ask—do I still think well of the Riviera? I say it is the *only* place in which to live and I know thousands of others think the same."

Then, just as our papers are full of the fight over bread rationing, he describes the "scrumptious meals." To make our mouths water he copied out a menu of his latest lunch in a wonderful villa, where entertaining is the order of the day. Mistinguette, that famous "evergreen" star, flies about in her bright yellow car, which she drives herself. She dresses all in yellow to match the dazzling motor and is certainly a proof that theatrical life—for the famous—prolongs youth. Noel says she only looks forty, then tells us her age which I will not repeat, though it is fairly well known.

When Mistinguette could not use her car, this indefatigable woman bicycled into Cannes from her villa at Juan, to do her shopping.

Fashion in the south of France remains simple but bizarre. You never see a hat on man or woman. The fair sex pile their hair high and a bow is its sole decoration. Masses of make-up, with the usual scarlet toenails peeping from sandals, continue to cheerfully outrage Nature.

As a relief, if I were there, I should like to escape for a day at least to Vence and wander round its courts and fountains and visit the church and old town. One can still have a most delectable lunch, I am told, on the terrace of "La Residence" and gaze at the vineyards and olive groves shimmering in the sun for miles below.

Noel and others who adore the Côte d'Azur will think me slightly mad when I say I would rather dwell by the peaceful Thames, and have the lovely spiritual influence of our quiet river garden, than own the finest villa on the Mediterranean.

"Really," I can hear some people saying: "There is no accounting for tastes!"

Yet often visitors have remarked when they come to our home: "If I lived here I should never want to go away!"

It is good to love one's home and be contented, to find in its atmosphere something that satisfies. As Dryden has written:

"Content is wealth, the riches of the mind;
And happy he who can such riches find."

It was rather amusing when Theodore was talking to Lady Butterfield, I suddenly noticed a red mark just between his eyebrows and I thought he had been stung or had a blow. I remarked on it and a friend said in a rather sly whisper: "Don't you see, someone has been kissing him, it's lip-salve."

I recalled that just before the visitors arrived he was sitting reading in an arm-chair and I had an urge to implant a kiss on that very spot which the Yogis tell us is an important nerve centre within the head. It is there the third eye—the eye of the brain—is said to exist. They go so far as to say (and it is worth trying) that if you want to hold a person's attention very definitely, you can, while talking, partially

hypnotise by gazing at this mental centre. Hindu sages meditate for hours on the light concealed between the eyebrows, since it is there that the light of the spirit can be seen.

Of course I hastily wiped off the disfiguring mark which my burst of affection had implanted on poor unsuspecting Theodore and then Lady Butterfield told us, talking of lip-salve, that in America hostesses are now featuring crimson table napkins. Certainly a good idea which we might do well to copy, for a red stain on delicate white napery is not a pleasant sight and nearly all lips are cherry-toned artificially.

I dare say some readers will smile at the thought of a woman being sentimental over her husband and kissing him for no particular reason at any odd hour of the day. I can understand their point of view, for I believe many happily married people are strangely undemonstrative. But why not try to keep the spirit of romance alive, even if you live long enough to celebrate your golden wedding? It is the enchantment of life which dies too quickly if set aside by the marriage tie. Remain a bride always and so encourage "the good man of the house" to be in heart and mind your bridegroom to the end. Only in this way can the march of the years continue in all the glory of early courtship. When twin souls meet and marry I feel sure they were preordained to be united. This may have originated the saying: "Marriages are made in heaven," or as the French proverb more definitely puts it: "*Les mariages se font au ciel et se consomment sur la terre.*"

A kiss has various meanings. To kiss the lips is to adore the living breath of the person saluted; to kiss the feet is to humble oneself in adoration; to kiss the garments is to express veneration to whatever belongs to or touches the person who wears them. And that ordinary remark often said to a child: "Kiss the place and make it well," is a relic of the common custom of sucking poison from wounds. Under what category a passing kiss, dropped on Theodore's forehead, comes, I cannot say, but I do hope husbands and wives are often a little foolish over each other, even in old age!

I wrote in one of the closing chapters of *That Reminds Me*—, which ended with our great victory over Germany and Japan, that personally the long period of "killing" took all the heart out of us for any form of enjoyment. I added it would be wonderful to participate in amusements again without the haunting knowledge that death and disaster were lurking just round the corner.

These words came back to me while enjoying the marvellous tennis at Wimbledon in the centre court and noticing, above the crowd of sightseers opposite, a dark cavern under a wrecked roof, the remains of the blitz which robbed that great sports meeting of two thousand seats. We were the guests of Sir John and Lady Archer, two friends we had not met for six years owing to the war. It added to the thrill of watching the tennis to be with them once more. Theodore says these

reunions seem rather like meeting people in the future state. We have lived through another kind of life and those we value, who were lost to us for a season, are doubly precious when given back in health and safety. Lovely to start picking up the scattered threads of long separation! We could not help exchanging some chat despite the fact that we had arrived at a most exciting stage in the proceedings. Any Wimbledon "rabbits" had been eliminated and the play was in its real sizzling cut-throat stage. I am not going to describe the wonders we witnessed, I prefer to talk about Sir John and his wife, my sweet friend "Nell." Their fascinating Richmond home, "Devonshire Lodge," with its magnificent river view, is of special interest because in a corner of the spacious drawing-room Sir Joshua Reynolds did a lovely painting of the Duchess of Devonshire, and this interesting portrait now hangs at Chatsworth. "Devonshire Lodge" is named after its famous resident, the Duchess who made such a good model for Sir Joshua's genius. He was living at the time at "The Wick," on Richmond Hill. I have already mentioned this attractive house in connection with Mrs. Stirling, who lives there with her husband, Colonel Stirling. They are an energetic couple, always busy with good works. At the moment as I write, she is putting her heart into the Montrose Fête at Petersham. Montrose House is the residence of Phillip Carr, the biscuit millionaire. It will be a treat to the visitors to see his gorgeous garden and Colonel Stirling is providing a fine performance of eighteenth-century music. Gifts have arrived for the sale from the two queens. The worst areas which have suffered from the blitz will benefit from this good effort. Mrs. Stirling also does a lot of charitable work in Scotland, and life never ceases to be busy for her.

Truly this is a busy summer. Hardly a day passes but we are asked to attend functions to help the many splendid activities so much in need of financial aid. What a contrast to recent years when fear and hiding in dugouts was the order of the day and night. No wonder we buckle our armour on and get down to these tasks with a good will!

Richmond seems favoured with men of initiative and charitable instincts. Sir John Archer, in 1938, gave the Archer Wing for private patients to the Royal Hospital, Richmond. Queen Mary takes a great interest in this well-run institution, for she never forgets her connection with the neighbourhood when she lived at "White Lodge" as a girl. The other day she visited the hospital and then went on to pay a personal call on Sir John and Lady Archer. Their gracious royal visitor looked charming garbed in white from head to foot, white shoes and stockings, white toque, dress, gloves and best adornment of all, her glorious white hair. I am glad I still have that mental image of the Queen Mother in her girlhood at Sheen, described in a previous chapter. Then she was the golden-haired "Fairy Princess," now the snow-white queen of statuesque majesty. The nation loves her dearly and I know that Sir John and Lady Archer thoroughly enjoyed her visit and were touched that she wished

to see all the rooms again at "Devonshire Lodge." Nell spoke of Queen Mary's beautifully slim ankles; the choice of light colours suits her to perfection. She has recently been seen entirely in pink of a delicate shade. If she selected that colour it can be taken for granted it was "the pink of perfection," for Queen Mary always dresses in excellent taste.

Each day for many months past I have been favoured with letters from strangers who write about *That Reminds Me*—. One I received this morning tickled Theodore and it was certainly original. My unknown correspondent in Adelaide, South Africa, says after expressing appreciation of the book, which she kindly assures me encouraged and uplifted her: "I have learnt to love you both—yourself and Theodore." To be loved by this stranger, who calls him familiarly by his Christian name, was a compliment which appealed to his masculine ego.

The letter says in conclusion:

"I have lived every minute in your lovely garden and strayed with you everywhere."

I wafted Theodore's love, with mine, to her, by air mail.

It is nice to think so many unknown people feel like intimate acquaintances through reading about our life, which I tried to detail quite honestly in that autobiography. Rolfe Mitchell, a bachelor friend (and incidentally a most faithful one), told me the personal note in *That Reminds Me*—, had made many readers say: "We feel we know Winifred. It isn't as if she were writing a book, but just as if she were talking to us."

I am glad he told me this. It gives me courage to open my heart and take my public into my confidence. Another correspondent speaks of my "understanding of life and close communion with the Divine," which makes me feel terribly humble. I blush inside. Would I were worthy of such generous words and thoughts!

I often wish I were as original as my husband, who does strange things which other people would never think of doing. He likes keeping records of events and every friend or relative who has passed on since our marriage in 1906 is entered in a "Book of the Dead," with the date of their decease. He often looks down the pages and thinks of them. As many were middle-aged and old who attended our wedding on that sunny day of 18th July, 1906, it is natural they have since departed this life. Saddest of all in that long list—the flower of youth, gleaned on blood-stained battlefields and in ocean depths. The harvest of two wars kept the Reaper busy gathering souls we trust are in the hand of God, where no torment shall touch them. An obituary notice in *The Daily Telegraph* to-day concluded its announcement with two words:

"Set Free."

I feel the relatives of that released person had vision and perhaps we shall see this deep truth, briefly stated, in future columns.

As I have wandered into rather sad paths I will end this chapter with a word about James Agate's review in the *Daily Express*, of 6th July, of J. B. Priestley's *Bright Day* to cheer you up and change the subject!

This article is headed: "Enough of these Provincials"!

I gather Agate dislikes reading dialect as much as I do, though he was educated in Yorkshire. I was amazed to learn what he told his readers of the forty-five years it took him to achieve his ambition, which was to get away from the provinces and come to London. Somehow I had never pictured him working in his father's cotton mill, or spending seven years standing at a counter making up bits of flannelette into travellers' samples, now and again cocking an eye at a volume of Ibsen. I heartily share his sentiments when he frankly says that he cannot read Mr. Priestley's novel. A book in dialect is anathema to me, though doubtless beloved of thousands of readers. James Agate does not say that any dialect is good or bad, he simply says: "I have had my fill of it." In this respect I am luckier, for dialects have never crossed my path in life.

It was strange just as I was thinking about dialects after reading Mr. Agate's views, I received from that very alive and progressive vicar at Hove, the Rev. C. McDonald Hobley, his interesting and informative *Parish Magazine*. Having imbibed his monthly letter, always such good reading, I turned to an article by Hoole Jackson, headed: "How other folks talk." Oddly enough, it was on dialect, which he very truly says is hard to put on paper and then goes on to translate what certain expressions mean in his Cornish village. Novels in dialect might be more acceptable to ignorant people like myself if they had Mr. Hoole Jackson to interpret their meaning. I was intrigued by many of the sentences he explained and will quote one or two as they may interest my readers. Instead of saying: "He's kissing her," they say: "He's kissen she." They never speak of bringing or fetching a load on their carts, they say: "I'm just going to pull the box from so-and-so." When asking for things to be made or cooked, the children would say: "Will you fit me a pasty for dinner, mother?" In Devon, the "dimpsey" is twilight. He describes an amusing little incident in the village when some fishermen puzzled a stranger by announcing: "That liner belongs to go out to-day." They use the word "belong" instead of "ought," and the men meant a fishing-boat of the line-fishing variety, which is always known as a "liner."

Only yesterday, Mr. Rolfe Mitchell said how funny it was in London that people serving him behind the counter or in buses so often called him "dear," while in old days "sir" was the usual form of address. I had noticed this, and always answer to "dear" as something quite usual from cloakroom attendants onwards. Well, it seems the expression, quite devoid of any sense of affection, must come from Cornwall, for Mr. Jackson tells us that everyone there is "my dear," man or woman. The shopman will "my dear" you unless he remembers you are a stranger

and then he will find it difficult to pull a "my dear" back from the end of his tongue. So, the writer concludes:

"When you are 'my dearest' you can take it as a compliment that you have been accepted as 'one of us,' as the Cornish folk say."

I liked Mr. Jackson's article and at the same time I feel grateful to Mr. Agate for saving me from putting *Bright Day* on my library list. Plain English is good enough for me—and even such a famous author as Mr. J. B. Priestley could not make me read a novel in dialect.

There seems to be a strange identity between personality and name and when only initials are given before the surname I am always curious to know what an interesting celebrity has been christened. J. B. before Priestley stands for John Boynton, quite "good companions" for the name he was born with. I rather wish that Mr. Agate had used his unusual name of Evershed, though James has certainly a fine old English flavour.

I wonder why fairies are said to be extremely averse to having their names known! I read this in my *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, which tells me so many strange things. In it I learn that fairies are the dispossessed spirits which once inhabited human bodies, but are not yet meet to dwell with "the saints in light." It is certainly a prettier idea than being cast down into hell, but I prefer to remember the fairies of nursery mythology—the good ones, the personification of Providence. But I still wonder why they should wish to withhold their names, just as I wonder why Jacob, when he wrestled with the angel, was anxious to know his opponent's name.

Since I am ending this chapter with a word on angels and names, you may like to hear this reference book gives the seven holy angels as:

"Abdiel, Gabriel, Michael, Raguel, Raphael, Simiel and Uriel."

Michael and Gabriel we know are mentioned in the Bible and Raphael in the Apocrypha, but I must confess the others are strangers to me.

Now why, I wonder, have I wandered to the subject of fairies and angels hot on the heels of James Agate and Mr. Priestley? It doesn't seem to fit in, I can only imagine the sudden early July heat wave has affected my head. It is difficult to find any connection between those two writers and these mystic beings, so I have decided to take an aspirin, throw a kiss to the moon with its face mirrored in the river and then let sleep steal time away until another day dawns.

I think the nicest evening prayer is this:

"I will lay me down in peace and take my rest, for it is Thou Oh! Lord only, that makest me dwell in safety.

"Into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

CHAPTER XXV

AN ECHO FROM SIAM

I was very tired when I finished that last chapter and so I laid down my pen and fled with my faithful Theodore and dog Jill to rest by the sea.

However much you enjoy your friends' society and all the happy meetings, it is good to lie *pardu* for even a few days. It was rather wonderful to exist a whole fortnight without a telephone call; sometimes it seems that insistent bell goes on all day in our house!

Theodore is always accusing me of having too active a brain, so I took his advice to lie fallow. Breathing sea air gives me new life, and swimming in salt water after the still waters of "Old Man River" is so invigorating that I shed years when I emerge from the merry waves.

Owing to war-time restrictions many children on the sands had never seen the glories of the ocean, a seaside holiday was for them a miraculous discovery. One small girl pointing to the shore was heard to say: "Mummy, can't we go down to the big bath?" I noticed babies too young to walk being plunged by their mothers into the "big bath." It is interesting when meeting children from the Mediterranean to see how they gaze with eyes of amazement at the receding or incoming tide. To them that changing scene is a miraculous playground thrown up by Father Neptune, to be retrieved all too soon by the restless return of gentle or angry white-frilled surf. They wish their sea was as accommodating and the novelty gives them an immense thrill.

It is pleasant I think to exchange the bitter-sweet scent of seaweed for the fragrant odour of wild flowers. A brief wander through country lanes shielded from wind by honeysuckle hedges makes a break from the gusto and vitality of ocean breezes. On such rambles I always like to peep into any picturesque old church I come across and how often one finds gems of architecture in quiet hamlets. There was such a one tucked away in a valley, a delightful situation for a recluse and a veritable fairyland for children. In this happy hunting-ground of orchards and cottage gardens, the church had a motherly look, as if it brooded over a family and claimed the place as its own.

Inside we found a perfectly sweet "Children's Corner," with a most human and touching prayer framed for the little ones to read. Outside the lowing of cattle and song of birds seemed to echo its deep plea, which ran as follows:

"Hear our humble prayer, oh God, for our friends the animals who are suffering, for all that are overworked and underfed and cruelly

treated, for all wistful creatures in captivity that beat against their bars, for any that are hunted, lost or deserted, frightened or hungry. For all that are in pain or dying. For all who must be put to sleep, we entreat for them thy mercy and pity. For all those who deal with them we ask a heart of compassion and gentle hands and kindly words.

Make us ourselves true friends of animals and may we share the blessings of the merciful, for the sake of thy Son, the tender-hearted Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN."

I hope a lot of children have learnt that prayer in the quiet church and that older people pray it too. The "wistful creatures in captivity" make me wish Zoological Gardens could be abolished, so that God's creatures might live in their natural element, instead of remaining prisoners and captives all their lives.

I have just been reading in that charming little paper *Everybody's*, an article by Margaret Capell-Wykes on "How Zoos Began." She makes you realise the age of these institutions which originated in pre-Christian times.

The ancient Greeks and Romans, the Pharoahs of Egypt, the French kings, German rulers and our own English monarchs from earliest days kept large numbers of animals in captivity.

The writer bewilders one with her graphic account of leopards, lions and bears, elephants, giraffes, camels, crocodiles, rhinoceros and hippopotami, etc., which furnished menageries for the great. One amusing incident will go home to present day people bewailing the price of alcohol. James I loved his private menagerie in St. James Park and was delighted to receive from the King of Spain the gift of an elephant and five camels. The Duke of Buckingham as Master of the Horse was ordered to see that "the elephant be daily well dressed and fed," and from September to April the beast was to be given not water but wine. This elephant's winter ration of six bottles of wine a day and his two English and two Spanish attendants cost the Treasury £275 a year. The writer also mentions that one of King James' subjects gave him a cream-coloured fawn for which he hired a woman as nursemaid.

If Margaret Capell-Wykes has not written a book on her wide knowledge of captive animals, she should do so, for it would prove vastly interesting. Of all her stories the one about Byron's pet bear intrigued me most. When travelling from London to Nottinghamshire he booked seats on the coach for "Byron and Friend." The friend was seen to be wearing a cap and—ostensibly—a fur coat. All went well till one of the passengers discovered that "the quiet gentleman huddled in the back seat wearing a warm winter coat" was actually a real, live bear. She does not tell us the result of the discovery. I should like to have heard more of this unusual traveller.

We always enjoy our weekly *Everybody's*, and rejoice in its popular success, because we are so fond of its owner, our friend, Mr. Frederick

Poke. Just as I was thinking of his great interest in this informative and much read magazine, I see in *The Daily Express*, of 1st August, that he is protesting against the terrible noise made—not by a neighbour's menagerie, but by the occupants of a 625 square-yard garden on Wimbledon Common, which contains: "One peacock, 100 turkeys, 50 geese, ducks, guinea fowls and chickens."

Mr. Poke, whose delightful residence, "Langholme," faces the common, said, when he appeared at Wimbledon Magistrate's Court, that the guinea fowl made "an awful noise like a sawmill at five or six o'clock in the morning; that the turkeys barked like a pack of dogs at all times and that the shrieking peacock was the worst of the lot."

I can well believe this and how I sympathise with him over the peacock! In my early childhood I shared with my parents, sister and the "St. Albans" household in general, what Mr. Poke has recently been called upon to bear. "Papa and Mamma," as we called them in those days, thought it would be a delightful idea to have a couple of these gorgeous birds to ornament the river lawn. Evelyn and I were immensely excited when two lovely peacocks arrived. It seemed marvellous to watch them parading by the river bank and proudly spreading wide tails in the sun. Of course they attracted admiration. Passing boats stopped to gaze at their dazzling colours as they strutted up and down. But at night the trouble began. No sooner had our household fallen asleep than the air became hideous with the piercing cries of the peacocks which should have been roosting peacefully in the trees. I recall my father going out in despair to throw lumps of coal at them to silence the maddening disturbance, but all in vain. Those birds shrieked on shrilly to their hearts content high up in the leafy boughs. I don't recall any neighbours complaining, but we all found this nightly din unendurable, so the peacocks were got rid of, to our great relief.

About that time, my mother, who loved peacock's feathers, decorated the drawing-room with some fine specimens, but soon came to believe in the superstition that they brought bad luck. After some unfortunate happenings, a peacock's feather was never allowed in the house again.

I wonder if she knew they were considered unlucky because the peacock's tail is said to be the emblem of an evil eye or an ever-vigilant traitor.

There is a quaint story which runs thus:

"Argus was the chief minister of Osiris, King of Egypt. When the king went on his Indian expedition, he left his Queen (Isis) Regent, and Argus was to be her chief adviser. Argus, with one hundred spies (called eyes) was evidently a very formidable character, for the legend says he soon made himself so powerful that he shut up the poor Queen Regent in a castle and actually proclaimed himself king. Mercury marched against him, took him prisoner and cut off his head; whereupon Juno metamorphosed Argus into a peacock and set his eyes in its tail."

This is recorded by the Rev. E. Cobham Brewer, LL.D., in his *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, which also gives a very different side to the legendary description of the stately bird. We are told: "by the peacock" was a common oath at one time and considered sacred. The fabled incorruptibility of the peacock's flesh caused the bird to be adopted as a type of the Resurrection.

A strange mixture—the Evil Eye and the Resurrection!

I trust that noble bird at Wimbledon Common and its humbler farmyard associates will no longer disturb the rest of nice Mr. and Mrs. Poke and their neighbours who formed a round robin to join in the protest. After all, what is more necessary than the gentle refreshment of sleep to which we are entitled by law?

I mentioned in a previous chapter pleasant reunions with friends separated by the recent war years, but to-day I have contacted an acquaintance of—dare I breathe it?—nearly forty years ago!

A voice reminded me on the telephone that we had known each other slightly as young girls when we were "doing the London season." Yes, I was once a girl!

I recalled my parents leaving "St. Albans" temporarily for a furnished house in South Kensington, during the brief period when London became very gay and different from our present capital. In those days the season meant that Mayfair mansions were thrown open for lavish entertaining, window-boxes glowed with flowers, balls and receptions called for the red carpets from doorsteps to pavement, while the sound of festive dance-music floated on the air. From the beginning of May, when the opening of the Academy started the season, till the great dispersal to Goodwood, the brilliant pageant flowed on and it was then I used to meet at social gatherings a Miss Power. We were both fond of diplomatic society. My special friend was Monsieur Métaxas, the Greek Minister here. He took me to some wonderful parties; being old enough to be my father, I was entrusted to his care. In those days of rigid etiquette, one never went to a dance with a young man, unchaperoned.

The Turkish ambassador, Musurus Pasha, was another of our kind hosts, also Phya Raja Nupraband, the Siamese Minister to the Court of St. James. He was particularly attracted by Miss Power, I used to meet her with him at The Supper Club and other pleasant places. He was frequently a guest at our house, but we never suspected that a surprising romance was to burst upon London society.

Suddenly it became known that Miss Power, the English girl who was so often with Phya Raja Nupraband, had married him and gone to live in Siam.

I used to wonder how his European bride would like that far-off land to which she had been wafted by the popular Siamese minister.

Nothing more to my knowledge was heard of her until after long years this unknown voice spoke to me on the telephone.

"You may not remember me," it said. "I am now Mrs. Cowie. I was married to the Siamese minister."

In a moment "Miss Power-that-was" loomed on the horizon of my memory. She told me she had discovered we were near neighbours through reading my Autobiography and suggested we should meet. I fixed a day for her to come to tea here and boldly asked before she rang off if her marriage to our Siamese friend had been a happy one.

"Most successful," she replied, but added that Raja Nupraband had died in 1928 and she was now Mrs. Cowie.

When we came together to pick up the threads of the past she said she would have known me anywhere and I noted that Time had also dealt kindly with her. We congratulated ourselves we had both "worn well," but Oh! how long ago it seemed since those days in London when we were single!

I fear I asked many questions and of course I wanted to know if she had a family.

"A boy and girl by my first marriage," she said, and went on to describe the beauty of her Siamese daughter who married a prince of the royal blood, Chirasakti, the adopted son and heir of the late King Phrachatipok. This monarch was extremely delicate and could not have children. He travelled to many countries in search of health, but doctors failed to give him what Nature withheld. While in England he made the great decision never to return to his native land, and after his abdication, the young boy who was recently assassinated was made king by the "Government de Jour."

Prince Chirasakti, who should have reigned, was a charming character, no mother-in-law could have spoken more highly of her daughter's choice. An officer in the Air Transport Auxiliary, he was unfortunately killed flying in 1942. The young couple met when they were both students at Oxford, Chirasakti was at Magdalene and his future wife at Lady Margaret Hall.

No wonder Mrs. Cowie is a great talker, for her mind must be stored with incidents of her many journeys. She has been thirteen times backwards and forwards to the Far East and is not a lover of the English climate.

She liked the heat in Siam and occupied for some time the summer residence of the late king on the banks of the River Meman. As we sat chatting on the banks of the Thames, with its limited stretch from our lawn to the towpath opposite, I thought how different it must look from that enormous river with its fringe of high palm trees growing to the water's edge.

Mrs. Cowie had in those days eleven Siamese cats which were kept busy killing the water rats. She used to breed Korat cats, exotic-looking

creatures with green eyes and exquisite dove-grey coats, and sold them to American tourists. She feared many did not survive, as they were extremely delicate. The value lies in the length of the tail which should reach the tip of the nose. Our Tamara passed by as we were talking. "That is a real Siamese," said Mrs. Cowie, with an approving look. She loved the marvellous orchids, wild and cultivated, which grow so prolifically in Siam. Naturally they thrilled an English woman with their great variety of colour and lavish blooms.

As most people talk of food to-day we drifted on to this mundane subject. With our shortage of fruit it seemed like a fairy tale to hear of great pineapples at the price of twopence each, the tall fruit-laden mango trees and luscious rumbletum, prickly outside but delicious within. She found Siamese food much more tasty than Indian fare and their daily meals had always to include sufficient for two guests. The household consisted of eleven servants besides the family and five-course dinners, with three-course lunches, were the order of the day. Great changes have come recently, but Mrs. Cowie declared it was amazing what you could get when she lived in that land of plenty. She often went to the market at six in the morning to buy a live turtle. It cost one pound according to English money and not many people knew how to cook this delicacy, but she had a cook who was an artist in the culinary line. With a sigh she declared English life at the present time was very boring and humdrum, with its everlasting scurry for food.

If I had gone to Siam as the wife of an important native the language would have been my principle headache. She confessed it took her some time to master its intricacies. They have different words which mean the same thing. For instance, dinner—to your servants is one word, if mentioned to your friends and equals another word is used—and yet a third if "dinner" is spoken of to royalty. We asked her to say something in Siamese and it sounded most baffling to our ears. With her husband and children she always spoke English. She said her daughter was like an exquisite Spanish girl, but the boy was much fairer and looks quite European. He was taken prisoner by the Japanese during the last war and for two years suffered cruel treatment in an internment camp. The Japanese devils actually extracted the gold fillings from his teeth, which seems the limit in the lust for loot! He is now in Siam and his mother looks forward to visiting him there when travelling conditions permit.

I thought how little the villagers of Chorley Wood, when they stand with Mrs. Cowie in food queues, dream that this unknown neighbour has been so far afield on life's journey. I could see she was fretting to return to France where she lived for many years, or to go to the warmer atmosphere of the East. I think we are all somewhat dreading the coming winter, with threatened coal shortage and houses robbed of their central heating. My view is, that having escaped invasion, we must face up to every hardship with a prayer of thankfulness that bombing

and blackout are things of the past. I always try to hold the thought in the darkest hours that better times will come.

If I want something badly, I surround the good I desire with a deep expectation that the wish will be granted. Belief in this possibility works out in a surprising manner and draws good luck to your circle. But confidence and expectation must always be backed up by supplication and prayer. If people practised praying to God in every necessity, throwing themselves on the mercy of the Higher Powers, I predict they would get many surprises.

It may not seem easy in the busy round of daily life to find time for prolonged supplication, but what might not happen if a whole nation fell on its knees—to entreat, to petition, to really earnestly request favours desired?

I have just had sent me from some unknown friend in America, a large paper-bound volume called *Harmony Digest*. Between the pale green cover its pages are clearly typed and illustrated with line drawings. In it a Dr. Laubach urges an army of ten million pray-ers. He explains how this army could be mobilised and set in action. Americans always do things on the grand scale. He pictures ten million people taking ten seconds, while reading the newspapers, to pray for any person who is likely to affect world affairs. He urges this should become a habit and countless thousands of secret blessings might be spread over the world. I agree with all he says, but have no room to quote from the article of burning words which pleads for a "Spiritual Renaissance upon earth."

Dr. Laubach is certainly a fine advocate for the Church Militant, the Church aflame, as he strives to burn out bitterness and hatred, paganism and crooked politics, selfish homes and dishonest business. He has certainly a gigantic programme. He maintains if sufficient recruits are drafted into this army, if beach-heads are established—if we want to fight—"together it can happen."

I hope it may be so and I wish this illuminating publication a world-wide success.

CHAPTER XXVI

WORLD CHIEF GUIDE

I sit down to write this chapter with great pleasure because it concerns an outstanding personality who I rejoice to call my friend. In my *Observations*, and also in *That Reminds Me—*, I have talked of Hampton Court Palace and those privileged occupants who dwell within

its historic walls. One of the most attractive of these royal-gift apartments is the home of Lady Baden-Powell, G.B.E., who in 1930 was made:

"World Chief Guide."

If ever a hard worker and a loyal heart deserved a beautiful title like that, it was Olave, wife of Lord Baden-Powell, that famous man through whose initiative and outstanding imagination the Boy Scout Movement was born. From the moment he gained King Edward's approval to resign his army work to become unexpectedly for the rest of his life the Scouts' beloved Chief, success for that grand organisation was assured. Its growth was like the unfolding of a magic tale, spreading over the universe. This marvellous leader held in his hands a gift for the boys and girls of the world, no less a gift than a new life of outdoor adventure and good-fellowship.

Travelling and working indefatigably until he had passed his eightieth year, he visited every continent and camped in every country. His wife (I never like to use the word widow) lent me his autobiography the other day: *Lessons from the Varsity of Life*. I sat up late into the night, absorbed by the story of one whose ability and genius seemed absolutely staggering.

All great men are humble. In this book, when he speaks of the honours conferred upon him by his Sovereign as unexpected "bomb-shells," one gets a glimpse of the sweet simplicity, the frankness and friendliness of his nature.

Lady Baden-Powell spoke of their married life as "twenty-eight years of Heaven," and tears came to my eyes as I pictured the happiness which radiated from their completely satisfying union. She believes all happiness has to be paid for and with courage worthy of her loved one she has given her whole life to carry on the work he started and brought to such ripe fulfilment. A greater memorial could not be imagined for the "Chief Scout of the World" (the title bestowed on him in 1920) than the career followed by his devoted partner after the Master called to Himself the soul of Baden-Powell.

No tongue could dare utter or words express what that parting meant to her, who sharing his world-wide activities travelled at his side to visit scouts and guides at the far corners of the earth. Millions of young men and women had the thrill of personally meeting these two dynamic Chiefs. Heaven alone knows how deeply the code of chivalry and adventure sank through their influence into the hearts of those who met them face to face.

The Boy Scouts' great Chief gave their sisters-in-the-field the name with its pleasing alliteration of "Girl Guides." The term "guides" was intended to give an idea of romance and adventure, while indicating also future responsibilities for directing their menfolk and bringing up their children on right lines. Surely we older ones might take a leaf out

of the young people's book and emulate the objects they endeavour to pursue, namely: To be trusted, to be loyal, to be useful, to be a friend to all, including friendship for animals—to be courteous and smile under all difficulties (even queuing!), to be thrifty and clean in thought, word and deed!

Yes, till we pass out of sight into the uncharted land where the "Chief Scout of the World" has gone, we would do well to obey the Scout Law.

Henry Holt and Company's New York edition of *Lessons from the Varsity of Life*, first printed in 1933, made reading an added pleasure. Clear lettering is such a relief after the strain of small print so familiar at the present time. This volume covers the field of a life which has left such noble tracks behind that its author did well to write his experiences to help, as he says, "some young fellows in aiming their lives."

When I came to the last page with its wonderfully tender note, I felt of course he would give his life lessons exactly the right ending. This is how he paints the farewell scene:

"There is scent of roses in the air—and sweet briar.
A rook caws sleepily in the elms near by, hiveward bound.
All is peace in the home at dusk, ere night closes down."

Then after speaking of the dear wife seated beside him in the silence of comradeship, the wife who had shared some of the toil of the afternoon—and the joy of it, he continues:

"Through an upper window comes the laughing chatter of
the young folk going to bed.
To-morrow *their* day will come.
May it be as happy a one as mine has been, God bless them!
As for me—it will be my bedtime soon.
Goodnight."

"Sleep after toyle, port after stormie seas—
Ease after warre, death after life, doth greatly please."

A beautiful conclusion to an outstanding book. I do not know the quotation, but I should like to change three words in the final line to—"life after death."

Now I shall fondly wrap up *Lessons from the Varsity of Life* and return it to its owner in the old palace where her dignified rooms seem well fitted to contain the many emblems of her husband's career. It is quite an education to see the trophies there which recall the many Freedoms of Cities which did honour to this celebrated citizen.

In a review by Eleanor Crichton-Miller of E. E. Reynolds' *Baden-Powell* (Oxford University Press), she speaks of the great man's whimsical originality which was his special charm and quotes what an old friend said of the Chief: "His personality remains to the last rather mysterious—simple and frank though he was—he never gave himself away and kept, as it were, his secret soul inviolate to the end."

One pictures Baden-Powell "strong as the rock which no breaker of stones can shatter," and this also is true of Lady Baden-Powell, who declares she has a cast-iron constitution. But I am referring to the strength of her character rather than to her health. In my long life I have met many hard workers who arouse my sincerest admiration, but I can honestly say the World Chief Guide outstrips them all.

Since the war, to further the movement she represents, she started off on a tour through stricken Europe and had marvellous experiences. Officially welcomed on all sides by people in high places, she attended innumerable Rallies, Camp Fires and Parades, never sparing herself and hardly taking any rest.

In France alone she was met by 40,000 enthusiastic Scouts and Guides, and as she moved on from country to country made a great personal contribution to this world sisterhood by her magnetic presence and splendid oratory.

After a tour so fatiguing and important one might picture the Leader taking a well-earned rest, but that would not have been Lady Baden-Powell! Rest is the last thing she seems to desire. Again she was off, this time on a long six months' trek on the other side of the Atlantic. I often wondered during her absence when we should meet and then a pleasant surprise came. Just as I had been writing about unexpected contacts with friends lost sight of during the war years, I had the thrill of coming upon her suddenly a few yards from our door. A familiar hatless figure was striding along with the famous gait I feel I must specially mention. Lord Baden-Powell tells us in part two of his *Lessons from the Varsity of Life*, how in the course of following up the science of tracking he had practised the art of deducing character from people's footprints and gait. He started what he called his "second life," when he definitely left the army in 1910. His best friend, "Ginger" Gordon, 14th Hussars, rallied him on being a confirmed old bachelor but prophesied he would "get it in the neck one day," and the writer adds: "I did." During this research into what the walk tells, he came to the conclusion that about 46 per cent of women were very adventurous with one leg and hesitant on the other, i.e., liable to act on impulse. So when he came to an exception it caught his attention.

He was going into Knightsbridge Barracks when he noticed a girl with a spaniel walking in a way that showed her to be possessed of honesty of purpose and commonsense as well as the spirit of adventure. He did

not see her face and since she was a total stranger to him, he thought no more about it.

Two years later, on board ship for the West Indies, he recognised the same gait in a fellow-passenger. When introduced to her he asked her if she had been in London two years ago near Knightsbridge Barracks, and had she a brown and white spaniel?

The answer was yes—yes to that and yes to a greater question later on, which made her the beloved companion and wife of the Chief Scout of the World.

It seemed wonderful on this recent summer afternoon late in July, to meet the famous gait coming towards me on the Hampton Court Road. I experienced a pleasurable shock as we clasped hands, because I had wanted so much to see her and was relieved to know she was home again after a journey which had taken this brave woman:

3,270 miles by sea,
16,610 miles by air,
6,355 miles by train,
3,565 miles by road.

And here she was safe and sound, walking from our village in Hampton back to the palace, looking just the same after visiting guides at 105 places, giving 62 Press interviews and radio talks and making 231 speeches to hundreds of guides, scouts and the general public, in Ontario, at Bridgetown, in Barbadoes; at Pachuca, in Mexico; and at Boston, U.S.A. After that she went on to rallies in her beloved West Indies of precious memory, since it was voyaging there in 1912 that she met her husband, who fell for the charms of the girl with the honest gait!

Political turmoil and strikes taking place at Kingston were not allowed to interfere with the meetings arranged for scouts and guides, so on "Thinking Day," a thousand of them mustered to join her in Government House gardens, bathed in hot sunshine. Surrounded by tropical trees and flowers, they shared their thoughts with the rest of the world.

I should like to tell my readers how "Thinking Day" started. The Guides hold a World Conference every two years. During one, in Poland, in 1932, a guider from Belgium suggested they should select a special day to think of one another with goodwill and rededicate their lives to the service of guiding and the ideals for which it stands. The Boy Scouts of the world keep the Festival of St. George as the Patron Saint of Chivalry and the scouts are the knights of to-day. The girls wanted to have a day of their own too, and selected 22nd February as being the birthday of both the Chief Guide and their founder. Strange that Lord Baden-Powell and his wife were born the same day of the month. "Thinking Day" was a happy name for this mutual birthday, when

millions of constructive good thoughts radiate flowerlike from many thousands of members. The date always means a heavy post for Lady Baden-Powell and on one of these anniversaries in her husband's lifetime they received as many as 260 telegrams apart from the flood of letters which marked the event.

Until she told me I did not know that guides and scouts always greet each other with a left hand shake. It was started as a secret sign and because the left hand is nearer the heart. But as she said: "It is not secret now that it is known and used all over the world!"

After last February's "Thinking Day" the Chief Guide, at two o'clock the following morning, flew across the few hundred miles of sea to Columbia, then high over the bleak, bare, dented coastline of Venezuela, to land in the beautiful evening light near Port of Spain, in Trinidad.

She was delighted to learn that guiding had spread in British Guiana, even to far distant places, and of course the World Chief Guide felt bound to visit these centres. So off she went, all undaunted, in a minute "Wasp," guaranteed to land on a puddle! Much touched by the welcome given her everywhere, she returned to the United States to play her part in a big Girl Scout Convention, where 1,600 delegates came together, both from far and near, to discuss the work and development of this valuable movement.

While she was telling me of those joyous days of companionship and friendly discussions in which she took so large a part, I held her hand tightly to make sure she had really returned and it was not all a dream! It is good to get a friend back who has flown so far away.

After speeding homewards across the Atlantic, ten thousand feet up, and without ever a sight of the sea, it must have been like waking from a strange vision to watch dawn breaking over a sleeping shadowed London and arrive for breakfast in her own home at Hampton Court.

On the following Sunday when we lunched quietly alone together, she told me that until this recent trip she had never failed to keep an engagement for thirty years. She broke her record in Rochester, New York, after moving along from city to city for five weeks. Her good fortune forsook her for once and she caved in with a poisoned throat, for the first time in her life. It gave her a sense of intense mortification to have to take a compulsory forty-eight hours' pause and be put to bed and plied with penicillin and various potions. After this brief period of rest the patient was off again to wind up the American part of her tour with a magnificent rally of 20,000 Girl Scouts in Boston, and from there to keep her tryst with British Columbia, 2,660 miles away.

Does this make your head reel? Mine positively swims as I write of Lady Baden-Powell's astonishing activities. I am glad to speak of them in this book because it gives me an opportunity of expressing my veneration for the work she has done and is doing to further a cause we must all deeply admire.

Certainly our neighbourhood should be proud of its illustrious resident, who guides the greatest Youth Movement of the day with such tenacity, tact and courage. Her work will blossom and bear fruit, just as her dear husband's has done, extending its influence to future generations.

The personal touch means so much, how well we all know this! From meeting their gracious Head and listening to her friendly words of counsel and advice, Guides throughout the world will be inspired to carry on and uphold the code to which they are pledged. It is well for England that these two grand citizens, Lord Baden-Powell and his Chief Guide wife, have sown seeds of such constructive value that a ripe harvest of fine thoughts and deeds is bound to result, long after older folk have said their "good-night" and gone to "sleep after toyle."

I love to listen when Olave Baden-Powell speaks in private or public, because she has such a magnetic way of getting her ideas across and driving a point home. I am sure she would not be guilty of making a speech too long! There is a South African tribe which guards against this evil by limiting its speakers to what they can say while standing on one foot! The speaker can talk to his heart's content as long as he is able to balance himself, but directly his upraised foot touches the ground his speech is over.

Lady Baden-Powell has the rare gift of conveying so much in a few words. After talking to her I feel braced up and fortified by some mystic charm which comes from an unusually radiant personality. When not in uniform, she dresses simply in neutral colours and there is something very noble about her face. You could not see her without realising the power under that calm brow and serene smile. She wears her dark hair parted above features absolutely free of make-up. Everything about her is so genuine and straight.

I can imagine the vast crowds mustering to meet her literally from Pole to Pole, carrying away in their book of memories the inspiring light of her eyes and the music of her voice. Not all who come forcibly into the limelight remain so utterly natural and unaffected, but this is the quality of the *really* great. I have noticed it time and again when meeting those who do things on a grand scale for the good of humanity. This Ambassador of Empire must be happy to know so many loving thoughts come to her across space and now I feel with other friends of hers, she should take a rest.

Not a bit of it, she tells me she is off again within three weeks to France, Switzerland, Czecho-Slovakia and Eire. May the best of luck attend her as she follows the track of essential things.

With that inborn quality of self-reliance she sees the road ahead very clearly. Her husband spoke of her as his right hand, not only in bringing up their own children, but a vast family of Boy Scouts and Girl Guides. Together, in his lifetime, they had the extraordinary experience

of seeing this movement grow from a tiny acorn of twenty-five boys encamped on Brownsea Island into a brotherhood and sisterhood which embraces almost every civilised country in the world.

Do you wonder as we sat over that *tête-à-tête* lunch, that I gasped to think of all she had seen and done since we last met and during those active years at her husband's side?

His idea of success in life was happiness. He tells us in his book: "Happiness, as Sir Henry Newbolt says, is largely gained by 'Happifying'!"

Baden-Powell firmly believed in the three "H's," namely: "Health, Happiness and Helpfulness." In being asked if he could define in a few words, say fifty, his idea of the best step to take in life, he declared he could do it in four.

Here are his very sweet words:

"*Makes a happy marriage*, meaning that he who succeeds in gaining the lasting affection of a really good wife has won the biggest step in life."

He goes on to explain he did not mean a jolly honeymoon of a few weeks or months and then toleration, but a honeymoon that lasts through the years.

In his wisdom he adds these final words of counsel:

"Yet one more item is needed to complete success and that is the rendering of service to others in the community. Without this the mere satisfaction of selfish desire does not reach the top notch."

Once a writer, unknown to him, described Lord Baden-Powell, in the *Manchester Guardian*, as "the richest man in the world."

"That sounds a big order," the Chief Scout said, "but when I come to think it out I believe he is not far wrong. A rich man is not necessarily a man with a whole pot of money, but a man who is really happy. *And I am that.*"

How wonderful for one so truthful and honest to be able to make such a statement!

Really happy, of course he was, with the knowledge of days lived in serving others and that loving partner at his side upon whom the glow of blissful years past and gone still remains.

I can well believe they were heaven on earth for her.

She has just asked me to join a Guide Headquarters Staff tea-party she is giving and I have joyfully accepted, for she is going to describe some incidents of her recent tour to her guests. It is to meet Head Secretaries of the International Department, Imperial Department, Book Department, etc.

The last time I had the pleasure of hearing her speak she was occupying a large throne-like chair in the centre aisle of St. Mary's Church, Hampton. The occasion was a service conducted by Girl Guides

and Boy Scouts, and young people of both movements packed the building. We thoroughly enjoyed that crowded gathering, with youthful voices reading the lesson and prayers, but best of all we heard Lady Baden-Powell's eloquent address.

God bless her good work—she's an angel!

CHAPTER XXVII

WALTER HUTCHINSON'S STUD

READERS of *That Reminds Me*— may remember when I wrote of certain bachelor friends who entertained so lavishly before the last war, I described "gentle and attractive Gilbert Beale," who gave us such a happy time on his 169-ton yacht at Cannes.

I shall never forget our pleasant trips in the elegant white *S.Y. Angela*, when our kind friend asked me to act as hostess at his cheery parties on board.

Since those peaceful days he has given up yachting and left the big house at Teddington, then his headquarters, to take up farming as a personal hobby as well as a national work much needed at this time.

Now and during the war, he has put his whole heart and soul into this new interest.

Fortunately he recently recovered from a long and serious illness which kept him away for many months from his farm.

Yesterday, 9th August, was a Red Letter Day for me when we motored to Basildon, near Pangbourne, to call on him at delightful "Church Farm." Parts of this fascinating house date back to 1535. Its grounds adjoin the church and a portion of the building was originally the priest's house, where they baked the bread for the entire neighbourhood. Seven tall Tudor chimneys give the house a stately air. A large barn designed by Lutyens, who frequently stayed there with the late owner, Major Morrison, a multi-millionaire, is a feature of the place. Because of their friendship the famous architect left the stamp of his genius on a building destined to accommodate cows!

We approached "Church Farm" by a long narrow road like a private drive. It is really a public thoroughfare ending at the church and Gilbert's house. Before we entered his domain our eyes were dazzled by a lovely stretch of dahlias which he had planted to decorate this public ground. He is a true flower lover, being one of the heads of the well-known firm of Carter's Seeds.

Our host was in the garden waiting for our arrival, surrounded by three lovely miniature curly grey poodles, and in his hand he held a slim elegant stick of pale yellow notched horn.

"This is for you," he said, after we had exchanged greetings. "I read in your Autobiography about Clement Scott, so felt you might like this remembrance of him. He gave it to my father, they were great friends."

The feel of its cool surface and the beauty of the horn as it caught the light gave me a strange thrill. As my readers will have gathered from a previous chapter, Clement Scott was a landmark in my youth and a dear friend of the family. Evidently he had given this stick to Gilbert's father in memory of a visit abroad, for on the embossed gold handle these words are inscribed:

"Ober Ammergau"
C. W. S.
to
E. J. B.
1880 .

I shall indeed treasure that memorial stick. It was so like Gilbert to meet me with a gift in his hand.

The interior of "Church Farm" is certainly unique. We entered the long dining-room by high wrought-iron gates and it gave one the impression of a thorough man's apartment, with its many sporting trophies and huge fish in a glass case over the mantelpiece. Life-sized oak figures guard each end of the room and the walls are decorated with brightly painted yachts, penguins and seagulls made from plywood by Gilbert's brother. I must say they were wonderfully effective. On the refectory table, where a sumptuous tea was spread, I noticed a bronze bell with the following inscription:

"One of the bells, presented to Mrs. Beale by
Henry Irving, June 3rd, 1878."

As I examined it with interest, Gilbert told me Irving gave it to his mother when acting in *The Bells*, perhaps one of the most famous rôles he filled in his illustrious career.

After tea we were taken to see the Dutch Friesian pedigree cows, really handsome black and white creatures, over eighty in all. Each had passed the severe test called T.T. Milking was in process, done mechanically with the six-unit Alpha-Laval. The calm satisfaction which seemed to surround the cows as they entered a building in solemn procession made one feel that dumb animals approve of modern methods. We watched the milk coming straight from the animal into a glass cylinder, which travelled through a pipe the full length of the building to drip in another apartment on to an iced cylinder, a freezing gadget for cooling, called the pulsometer of Reading. We had not seen this new invention

before. At present 32 of the herd provide 100 gallons a day, but this will be doubled in the autumn, all being well, after 60 have calved.

When the farm inspection ended, Gilbert took us on to visit his relative, Mrs. Howard, of Coombe Park. Her stately Whitchurch home stood empty high above the Thames, having been vacated by the American Air Force, who had it as a rest home during the war. Patients and nurses lived there in the lap of luxury.

Mrs. Howard, a most attractive and charming châtelaine, was allowed by the authorities to occupy the annexe previously used by some of her domestic staff. She speedily decorated and furnished it tastefully. There she received us most hospitably, in fact, she made us so welcome, we did not leave till late at night.

The drive from "Church Farm" to Coombe Park by one of the most picturesque reaches of the Thames was a real joy. Gilbert pointed out his land, 300 acres, bordered by river, road and railway, very advantageously chosen for an attested herd of such value, as no one interferes with the fences. To reach Coombe Park we crossed a bridge and before entering the village, toll must be paid, a strange old-world custom in these modern times, which must surprise trippers!

Until recently, when Mrs. Howard sold some of the houses, she owned the whole village. The Happy Valley and 700 acres of property on that romantic countryside are hers. The windows of Coombe Park command exquisite views and the situation alone must have helped to mend the minds and bodies of those invalid airmen, who were so happy there. The gardens and conservatories, in which peaches and grapes were ripening, must have been greatly appreciated, while the gracious tree-garlanded hills sloping up from the river form a picture of simple loveliness.

One might well imagine this pleasant oasis of green pastures and fields ripe with corn was just a piece of England where harvesting played the chief part. Instead Mrs. Howard's home has been for years a centre of interest to the sporting world.

In the lifetime of her popular and devoted husband, Coombe Park became noted for its stud, and Mr. C. E. Howard, so well known in racing circles, had many outstanding successes.

"Willonyx" was perhaps his most famous horse and deserved to be honoured by an imposing monument in the grounds, consisting of a seven-foot high Egyptian figure 2,000 years old, carved out of a solid block of marble. This handsome memorial records "Willonyx's" triumphs as follows:

Chester Cup.
Ascot Stakes.
Ascot Gold Cup.
Cesarewitch.
Jockey Club Cup.

In the Cesarewitch he carried the record weight of nine stone five pounds, and after these brilliant efforts retired to stud.

Now these premises have been taken over by Walter Hutchinson, the famous publisher, and knowing our interest in him, Mrs. Howard asked us to come over and see his stud.

I only wish Walter, whom I have known since he was a young man fresh from Oxford, had been at my side as we made the grand tour of his property. First and foremost in the list of these famous horses "Happy Landing" stood out in my mind, for I am not a racing woman, but I always followed the career of this gallant animal. To make his personal acquaintance in such intimate surroundings was a privilege I had not expected. It gave me an extraordinary sense of pleasure to stroke his soft satin nose and touch the shiny deep bay coat like fine silk. His handsome mane was neatly plaited. There was sadness in the memory that this grand horse missed being a Derby winner when he was baulked, injured and came in third by only a neck and a short head! His name will not easily be forgotten and it is good to know he has landed safely at such a beautiful stud farm.

After that we paid a call on "Mick's Sister" and her foal, "Happy Landing's" latest wife with offspring. I thought the foal resembled its father for it certainly had a handsome face.

Horses, like humans, have their funny little fads. "Happy Landing" wanders at will across the grass of his private paddock which adjoins his box and takes his daily roll on any part of the ground, while his near neighbour, "Artist Prince," keeps rigidly to the same tracks, making paths for himself which he never deserts. He won the Cambridgeshire and was born at his present home, returning to his birthplace after he became Walter's property.

There was a particularly pretty foal featuring a white star on its forehead. The famous sire was "Shahpoor" and the dam "Colorado Canyon."

The size of this property Walter has acquired can be judged when I tell you there are 70 horse-boxes advantageously distributed in different ranges. This is of great benefit in case of any infectious illness which—Heaven forbid!—might occur. We inspected what I called the nursing home for the maternity cases—foaling-boxes with a sitting-up room in between. This had communicating doors and hatches, through which the vigilant watcher sees how matters are progressing with the mares. The room contains a comfortable armchair, a stove for warmth and a large medicine-chest complete with every possible remedy which may be needed. Somebody sits up in that room every night from early in January to mid-May. This year 40 foals have been born there. April is the best time to see these delightful small creatures enjoying a new world.

When we returned to Mrs. Howard's quarters she pointed out a lovely painting of "Willonyx," whose stately monument we admired

so much. The portrait of this notable horse was by the late Lynward Palmer, who recently never painted a picture under £500. It made a charming decoration in the improvised sitting-room, while in the dining-room there were trophies of many winners.

It is good to think Mr. C. E. Howard's stud is being carried on by its present owner so successfully. Fifteen foals were born there in the first fourteen days of last April, which was "pretty hectic." We spent a pleasant evening with Mrs. Howard and Gilbert before motoring back through dark country lanes in blinding rain. It was the one night of the week that a gorgeous harvest moon had not painted the countryside silver and shed dazzling moonbeams on the river.

My head was full of all the pleasant sights I had seen and I felt grateful the rain did not come in time to spoil a memorable pilgrimage to both farm and stud. I thought of those rows of stolid cows with their large pathetic eyes and patient bearing and then of that very different creature—the horse. In the Catacombs this grand animal is the emblem of swiftness of life, in Christian art, of courage and generosity, hence St. Martin, St. Maurice, St. George and St. Victor are all represented on horseback. I recalled various references to horses in fable and history, for instance the words written about Fitz James' horse in Scott's *Lady of the Lake*:

"Stand, Bayard, stand! The steed obeyed
With arching neck and bended head
And glaring eye and quivering ear,
As if he loved his lord to hear."

I like what is told of Alexander the Great's celebrated charger "Bucephalus." His master was the only person who could mount him and he always knelt down to take Alexander up into the saddle. A City was built for his mausoleum.

The horse has been poetically dubbed: "Swifter than an eagle, swift as the wind, swift as a swallow." Astolpho's horse in "Orlando Furioso" is said to have come from a strange stud, where its dam was Fire and its sire the Wind. It fed on unearthly food.

From these mythical creations one may recall the white stallion "Marengo," which Napoleon rode at Waterloo, whose remains are in the Museum of the United Services, London, not forgetting Wellington's charger in the great victory for England, "Copenhagen."

Our friend, Captain Wiley, left me in his Will a beautiful gold signet ring which had belonged to the Duke of Wellington, with his profile on one side and at the back some precious hairs from "Copenhagen's" tail. I wore it for a time and it was much admired especially by lovers of horses. Then I thought it seemed so entirely a man's ring that I gave it to Theodore—I liked it on his finger. Unfortunately one day the ring

disappeared, never to be traced. We suspected it vanished down a pipe when Theodore was washing his hands. A sentimental loss for us both, with its personal and historical associations and one we much regretted.

I can picture many a country lover secretly breaking the last of the ten commandments after a visit to Gilbert's farm and Walter Hutchinson's stud: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's cows, nor the lovely stallions of your publisher, nor anything that is his."

In my last book I gave an account of the Great House of Hutchinson, which surprised many of my readers. They knew nothing of Walter's numerous tastes and activities, it amazed them to learn this noted publisher had so many interests outside the world of books. They little thought it was possible for a man to be the head of perhaps the biggest publishing business in the world and at the same time crowd his life with other activities. Hobbies which would demand the entire attention of any ordinary person are mere sidelights to him. I feel that racing is his favourite pastime, but he certainly allows himself very little leisure and hardly ever relaxes.

Not content with collecting 3,000 pictures, coloured and black and white engravings and mementoes for a "National Gallery of British Sports and Pastimes," which he is going to present to the Nation, he has recently purchased Constable's famous landscape, "Stratford Mill on the Stour," for £43,050, a masterpiece so beautiful that it has been called: "the unattainable achieved."

I will not chronicle, since it is so well known, his lavish gifts to charity, but what is less known is the variety of his interests and hobbies. Industry, the Arts, Anthropology, History Publishing, Farming and Racehorse breeding, Managing Director and Chairman of more than eighty companies—a list to wonder at, attached to a man of surprises. Walter is blessed with the sweetest of wives and two daughters of very different ages. In a few years the eldest will be "coming out" and the youngest is still in the fascinating baby stage.

Such men who do so much in the course of a lifetime must surely dream dreams and see visions. One pictures the birth pains which go with such industry, for Walter does not believe in the Latin proverb that you will break the bow if you keep it always stretched. By the power of his indomitable will he works at high pressure from morning to night.

It is not an easy quest to try and sum up the life and character of the world's really big builders. Their technique baffles one. Imagination wanders far afield if you attempt to know and understand their minds. The task is beyond me, I just look on in wondering admiration and as I scribble in my quiet river home repeat Wordsworth's soothing lines:

"Go forth, my little book, pursue thy way,
Go forth, and please the gentle and the good."

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE CHIEF CONSTABLE OF LEICESTERSHIRE

Am I like a dog that hunts in dreams? Sometimes in waking dreams I race like a hunter after his quarry, following the track of bygone years to meet again in memory those precious souls who have passed into the unknown.

There are proud memories connected with dear ones' lives given in the service of their country. I hold in reverence the names of my sister Evelyn's two sons, Lawrence Grogan, M.C., killed in action in 1918 at the age of twenty-one, and his brother, Terence, who perished in H.M.S. *Hood*, during the last war. To lose two sons for England has been the sad fate of my sister and also of my brother-in-law, Lieut.-Colonel Trevor Cory, who apart from his many military honours is a Knight of Grace of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem.

His brave boys, by his first marriage, Edward and Eric, were both in the Rifle Brigade, and fell in the 1914 war. Trevor did splendid work overseas during that period, particularly in Gallipoli. In 1911 he married Theodore's sister, Hilda, and the union has been a very happy one. Her younger sister, Mabel, has two sons, Kenneth and Ian, who are fortunately alive after serving in the XIIth Lancers during the last war. They are both colonels. Their father, Colonel Fred Smith, C.B., well known in Ayrshire, died just as he was about to take his regiment, The Cameronians (8th Battalion), overseas in 1915.

The Army and Navy are very near my heart, but there is another service I greatly admire, our brave Police Force, famed for its courage at home and in the far-flung corners of the Empire.

I have just been talking to Colonel Lynch-Blosse (Cecil), Chief Constable of Leicestershire, who has this year been awarded the King's Police Medal. He married his cousin, Violet Lynch-Blosse, a niece of Theodore's. They looked in on us when motoring from their holiday flat in Brighton back to their permanent home in Leicester, and I asked him to tell me some of his experiences, which I knew would be interesting.

I found him very communicative on the subject of India, which is so much "in the news" at the moment. He had some very strange experiences there which he related so vividly, I will try to repeat them in his own words.

"Early in my career in the Indian Police," he said, "I was sent to complete the reorganisation of the Police of a Native State. Shortly after I had taken charge I went with other state officials to a Christmas Camp—a most delightful occasion. During the festivities news was

brought in that two old scoundrels had returned and had taken the Gir Forest and 'declared war' on the State. These rogues had already much blood on their hands, but some two years previously had disappeared, become holy men and gone on pilgrimage, and we had hoped that we had seen the last of them. They imagined that they had a grudge against the State and their proclaimed method was to take to the forest and mutilate such cultivators as they could find in the fields and so cause loss of revenue by frightening the cultivators off the fields and thus destroying the harvest.

"The Gir Forest is a tract of light forest about 1,200 square miles in area and incidentally the home of the only lions in India. It is very fertile country.

"My job was to go off to the forest to organise my campaign and on arrival at my first camp, about a quarter of a mile outside a village, I saw my horses being taken off to the village. I asked why and was told: 'Lions, Sahib.' That night as I dined in the open my old butler stood by me and talked. 'I well remember this camp, Sahib,' he said. 'The last time I was here poor Carnegie Sahib was killed by a lion,' and that night a very frightened young man lay alone and listened to the occasional noise of lions round the camp. However, I soon discovered that the Gir lion is a benevolent beast unless interfered with and I came to know them well.

"My two scoundrels meanwhile were collecting recruits, attacking villages to get arms and money and when ready, started operations. Their method was to emerge from the forest in the evening, catch some innocent cultivators and cut off their noses and ears. Each fresh outrage spread panic, 1,200 square miles of good hiding country is a great deal of ground to search and matters became serious. After some time a police party came early to the scene of a crime, a local tracker was procured and at dawn we set off in pursuit. All through the day the tracks were followed and at sunset the party came up with the outlaws, a battle ensued in which about four or five of the outlaws were killed and others wounded and captured, but the two leaders escaped.

"One day a dreadful looking old thug turned up at my office, told me he was a criminal with all the crimes in the calendar to his credit, but that he would kill my two outlaws for me. I liked the old rascal, so sent him off with a party. He was as good as his word, found these two men, fought them single-handed and killed them both! Unfortunately he died of his wounds. I erected a monument to him in the forest."

"That was nice of you," I declared, "the 'old thug' deserved a memorial!"

Then I pressed him to tell me some more of his experiences and with his charming smile he continued:

"There was a mill strike on in Bombay and it was my early tour of duty. I arrived, unshaven, in old riding boots and an old uniform (I'd

hoped to be home for breakfast), to be told by a very frightened Indian Sub-inspector that H.E. the Governor had gone to his favourite church in the dock area and that a large crowd of strikers was waiting outside the church to demonstrate when he came out. I arrived at the church just as service was finishing, to find a crowd of about 7,000 mill hands outside, fortunately in good humour. H.E. was walking down the aisle as I arrived. I told him the position. His reply was typical: 'Well, it's your job to get me out.' We got into the car, I admittedly with my heart in my mouth. H.E. never said a word until we were past the danger area, after which he proceeded to tell me all about my career in the Indian police. I was a very proud young man!"

I felt an echo of that pride as I looked at that strong face stamped with character and thought how well fitted Cecil was to deal with these many hazardous situations.

"And when did you come home?" I asked.

"In 1925, and I was wrecked off Port Soudan. We all got off safely, but were hopelessly crowded in the one hotel and no one seemed to be doing anything about getting us home, so a pal and I jumped a collier up the Red Sea. Regulations, however, forbade the carrying of passengers on a collier through the Suez Canal, so at Suez we were transferred to a large passenger liner returning from Australia and were entered third class with Italian labourers returning from Australia, booked for Naples. The prospect was most unpleasant, five days of acute discomfort. On arrival at Port Said the agent's launch came alongside and I was conducted to his office, where I was told that the last two berths on the P. & O. Mail to Marseilles had been booked for my pal and me and that the agent's chit would see me through to England. The agents were Cory Brothers and as the manager explained: 'You see, I worked in Cardiff with Mr. Frank Lynch-Blosse, and of course when I saw your name I knew something had to be done.'

Frank Lynch-Blosse married Theodore's eldest sister and if he were alive now would be Cecil's father-in-law. Frank held an important post in the firm, he was very witty and popular and got his humour from his Irish ancestry. Sir Robert Lynch-Blosse is now the head of the family.

I asked Cecil if this incident concluded his foreign service.

"Oh no!" he replied. "Shortly after being demobilised after the first world war I was appointed Deputy Commissioner of Police for Bombay City, a position I held for six years until I retired. There I made the acquaintance of one of the best thieves I have ever met in thirty-six years' police service. Many people had been prevented from coming to India during the war and when shipping became freer, towards the beginning of 1920, many ships of unusual lines sailed into Bombay Harbour—a huge expanse some ten miles by four to five miles. All of a sudden ships' captains started complaining that after arriving in the harbour their

cabins had been entered during the night, the safe keys taken from under their pillows and the safe rifled, usually to the extent of several hundreds of English pounds. I was in charge of the docks police and this activity alarmed me and I started going down the harbour in my launch, meeting incoming ships and warning the captains. Some days several ships made harbour together and I could not visit all, but no ship that I visited was ever robbed. Gradually the field narrowed and at last a man was brought in—heavily manacled. He turned out to be a famous thief and escapee. No jail could hold him. During a long conversation he told me that he knew where I'd been going and of course he used no drug. The captain's story was always the same. They were light sleepers, woke up feeling drowsy and found the safe-door open.

"My prisoner said: 'What's the use of being a thief, Sahib, if you can't take the keys from under a sleeping man's pillow?' 'But why?' I asked, 'can you always escape from jail?' 'Because I always go into jail with fifteen sovereigns and with that amount of gold I can escape from any prison in India.' 'But,' I said, 'you're searched on going into jail.' 'Ah, Sahib, but where I keep my gold my searchers will never find it. You see, Sahib, in my young days I was apprenticed to a very fine thief and with the aid of a lead ball and some acid he made a pocket underneath my tongue and reaching down into my chest, and there I can carry fifteen sovereigns!' After this amazing statement he swallowed and reproduced coins which I supplied (not sovereigns)!"

"This time he went away for what we call 'a stretch,' and on coming out he made the criminal's prime mistake—he changed his method and took to robbery with violence and ended up in the Andaman Islands.

"I think I should add that I have never understood quite why this fellow told me his story, but I'm very glad he did."

So am I, because it is a most interesting addition to my *Observations*. Cecil, bless him! is well worth observing. I may say the same of Violet, his wife, who is most attractive and always immaculately dressed. They are perfectly suited to each other and one of the happiest married couples I know.

I only hope my readers will enjoy this recorded conversation as much as I did. I regretted he could not wait to tell me more. He has had an adventurous career, a life of infinite variety. I gather he finds police work in England somewhat dull after India. To an average mortal the daily round he ably fills would seem very full of incidents and thrills.

I never had a craving to go to India, its fair face always seemed to me to conceal some secret dread and inward horror. A fierce contending nation to those who do not know the softer side. The magic and persuasive sound of its native music would, I expect, have charmed away that queer shrinking, which made me hope as a girl I should never fall in love with a man in the Indian Army.

I pictured perhaps too vividly the vast infested forests and coloured

forms heavy with a weight of mystery that creep into so many stories connected with the customs and habits of its people.

We have policed that vast territory so well in the past, I can only hope the future of India may remain in safe hands. I am sure Violet Lynch-Blosse must be glad that her husband is no longer chasing criminals in Bombay City or sleeping within sound of lions lurking outside his camp.

As Chief Constable of Leicester I know he does fine work and I rejoice at the honour the King has bestowed on him in this Year of Grace, 1946.

CHAPTER XXIX

FAMILY LOVE

MORE contacts with friends who passed from our ken during those long separating years of war! This time it was a surprise call from the Rev. Arthur Buxton with his wife and daughter, who were staying in London. They had come to visit many old scenes from their present home, "Upton House," Cromer. The name Buxton is almost a household word in that county. They are a large family and I feel sure Arthur Buxton must be one of its most popular members. In our part of the world, and it is not such a long cry from Norfolk to Middlesex, he was from 1920 to 1936 the beloved Rector of All Souls, Langham Place, such a noble old London church, which in his day was always filled to overflowing.

As well as being a fine preacher, he has a magnetic personality. At that time he frequently conducted the little morning service daily held by the B.B.C. The Buxton's Rectory near All Souls was badly blitzed during the war. In their time it had a name for lavish hospitality. Mrs. Buxton and their young family shared his popularity. The daughter who came last week to call on us with her parents has, I feel sure, a musical future. She is studying the piano seriously and played most delightfully.

"A future Irene Scharrer!" I said, noting the exquisite touch of those long artistic fingers and I do not think I could have paid the young golden-haired musician a greater compliment. That crowning glory, hair the colour of ripe corn, is inherited from her father, who was equally golden when we first knew him. At any age he would always attract admiration with his tall figure and intellectual face, and as we sat by the river talking over past days, we recalled with a certain thrill a dinner-party we attended at the House of Commons.

Our host, genial Mr. Somerville, M.P., departed this life some years ago, but I venture to think he enjoyed that party with its original finale as much as his guests. Let me describe it in a few words.

I sat between Mr. Buxton and Sir Philip Gibbs, the well-known author. The only fragment of the latter's conversation I remember after this lapse of time was the fact that he confided to me how much he disliked his own voice when broadcasting and compared it unfavourably with the dulcet tones of his author brother, the late Cosmo Hamilton, so popular on the radio. I could sympathise, because I had just given a book talk on a gramophone record, which was to be sent all through Australia. When I heard the result I could not recognise my own voice at all and thought it awful. I only hoped it would not put Australian readers off my books!

When dinner ended late that night, Mr. Buxton said: "Will you come and see my church? I have some novelties I can show you and if you care to climb the tower you will get a glorious view over London by moonlight."

We all joyfully accepted and hurried into our cars to drive to Langham Place. It seemed so strange, a gay dinner-party ending in such a romantic pilgrimage. Opening the door with his key, Mr. Buxton ushered us into the beautiful church, which he at once flooded with light. In those days women never entered a church unhatted and to see figures in evening dress wandering round as if they were at a reception was rather startling and weird. Later Mr. Buxton turned off the illumination and left just one hidden light which he had installed over the altar, that it might shine down on a magnificent picture of *The Judgment Hall*. Only a true artist would have thought of this addition to show up a glorious painting. The effect was increased by the emptiness of the church and the lateness of the hour. I think at that time a radio in a sacred building was unknown. I remember it seemed exciting when we discovered the imaginative rector had installed loud-speakers in his church tower. For our benefit the quiet London district outside suddenly broke into exquisite sound while we inside listened entranced to records from Bow Bells and the chimes of St. Margaret's, Westminster, which functioned when weddings took place at "All Souls." A connoisseur of bell-ringing once asked Mr. Buxton: "How do you train your bellringers so perfectly?"

I have often wondered what residents and pedestrians outside thought was happening when they heard the harmonious disturbance at midnight. Perhaps some thought they were dreaming, others puzzled over the strange occurrence, asking themselves if they heard aright.

It certainly made beautiful music on the still air, as stars shone down upon the great city. People probably asked each other the following day: "Did you hear those bells last night? What could have been happening at All Souls?"

As we wandered round inspecting all there was to see, Mr. Buxton put on a record inside the church. I shall never forget how sweetly the notes vibrated through that empty building, for it was my favourite anthem: *O for the wings of a Dove*. One of Mr. Buxton's choirboys sang

it at Buckingham Palace, after which, for many Sundays, the church was even more packed than usual. It was the rector's idea to perpetuate that boy's fine voice on a record and it must have given joy to hundreds of listeners.

The final entertainment which Mr. Buxton kept to the last was the climb to the tower, not an easy task for us womenfolk in our long evening gowns. I deposited my feather fan in a pew and Lady Gibbs, who is, alas! no longer on earth, wondered, with me, if we dared attempt the ascent.

Sporting Mrs. Buxton, who knew the ropes, urged us on, the men going first for obvious reasons. Even ankles were only shyly revealed when long skirts were in fashion. I think I had a medium train, I liked them on my best dresses and we were all very smart that night! The House of Commons has greatly changed since those days when a dinner-party in such venerable surroundings was an occasion demanding ceremonial attire.

It certainly was not an agreeable journey heavenwards as we mounted that tower! But the effort was rewarded by a view which even to old Londoners looked mystic, unusual and mysterious. The roofs of houses became magic platforms for stars to dance on, "the lights of London Town" twinkled fairylike down shaded avenues of streets, dusty and worn by day. Now they had taken to themselves silver pavements veiled with moonshine. Squares in which trees lifted a canopy against the sky, might have been gardens planned for ghosts to walk in. I cannot attempt to describe the strange elusive charm of that midnight view from the tower of All Souls, but I have never forgotten that happy occasion. Those shadowy outlines grouped in the quiet background of memory hold a treasured place. Somehow it seemed as if the soul of London lay at our feet and we could almost feel its heart-throbs.

It was good the other day to recall the wizardry of that night with Arthur Buxton, whose kind thought had provided an unusual and still undimmed picture.

When the Buxtons left us after a far too short visit, for they were dining on Tagg's Island before motoring back to town, a friend who also came from Norfolk talked of their family tree.

"They are a tall and sporting race," he said. "I specially recall one member, a lady, handsome and large-boned, between six and seven feet tall. She created something of a sensation when after her husband's death she appeared in a widow's veil reaching to her feet. She looked like an imposing statue come to life as she walked through the village followed by respectful eyes, her height accentuated by the length of that black veil which lay against the whiteness of her hair."

It is suddenly dawning on me that I am near my "journey's end," so far as this volume of *Observations* is concerned. As they say in old age

the mind travels back to early days, I feel I may be forgiven if I say a few words about my childhood before closing down!

It is evening now at "St. Albans." I glance through my window to see the dark shadow of trees on the pearly water and lights gleaming across the race-course, while our own garden looks dim and sleepy as night falls. The swans are among hidden rushes on a distant bank, heads buried in their soft feathers—father, mother and a single cygnet produced this season.

Being a weekday, the river for the moment is entirely empty of craft and as there is no wind it lies smooth as a lake. All is strangely silent. The scene seems set for memories of past days.

In my childhood our long lawn, so piercingly green after recent rains, was broken up by the Victorian fashion of flower beds. Ours had the usual group, one in the centre square and formal, with four satellite "S"-shaped beds circling round. These were planted out with bright geraniums and had standard rose trees which produced prolific and very beautiful blooms. My father loved giving flowers away and taking them to friends in London. He believed in constantly picking the roses and assured us this produced a good crop. I never remember him gardening except when the time came to prune the rose trees. He considered no gardener could do this so well as himself, for he had his own methods which I believe were unconventional, but very successful. I fancy he thought professionals over-pruned. Now those flower beds bring back to my mind the restless energy and exuberance of youth, when Evelyn and Winnie chased each other round and round those circles, in and out untiringly. Then the lawn displayed a large pink may tree and our beloved magnolia, covered each summer with white blossoms the shape of water lilies, which drenched the air with perfume. The latter has only recently died and is terribly missed.

We were never without a dog, but one special pet lives for ever in my heart, a brown poodle named "Pompey." He was a real character and such a member of the family, he seemed to my childish fancy exactly like a human being, so that I loved him as a younger brother. His intelligence was amazing and he afforded visitors much amusement with his tricks.

My father's high-backed oak chair with padded velvet arms at the head of the dining-table, gave Pompey the opportunity of standing during meals upright beside his master, front paws on the arm of the chair. Frequently he laid his head on "Papa's" shoulder in an attitude of adoration. Then came the show piece. His master had only to make a secret sign and off went Pompey round the chair on his hind legs, to the surprise of strangers who were not expecting this performance. He inherited these talents from his father, a big black poodle owned by our artist friend, Mr. Lomas, who trained his dog to walk completely round

a large dinner-table. Fritz had not Pompey's angelic nature, but never disobeyed when commanded to do his tricks, though he growled furiously through the whole performance, which in our view robbed it of charm.

Poor Pompey once fell from grace and was never allowed to forget his sin. We had only to say: "Who stole the sausages?" and he at once rushed into a corner and sat up in a begging attitude, as if pleading to be pardoned.

In my parents' bedroom he had his own armchair, a very large leather one, which had belonged to my grandfather. It was absolutely sacred to him and known as "Pompey's Chair." No one sat in it but the curly brown-coated owner.

He was well known as a character in Hampton and there was never any need to exercise him. We had only to open the front door and off he trotted for his daily walk. He frequently paid visits to our friends, preferring to call at tea-time. If admitted he would settle himself down, enjoy any hospitality offered in the way of cakes and left discreetly before overstaying his welcome.

He had a strange hatred of music. Fortunately there was no radio to torment him in those days. He was instantly put out of the room if anyone played the piano, since it was a signal for him to throw up his head and howl piteously. This same mournful sound always accompanied the sirens from tugs or pleasure steamers signalling the lock-keeper to open the gates.

If I had been devotedly attached to a young brother I could not remember him with greater emotion and love than I felt for this dumb animal.

Marriage brought me a real treasure of a brother in my dear Robert.

Theodore and Robert are the only sons living of a family of sixteen. They have four sisters still alive, I am glad to say, but I see more of the bachelor brother who has such an attractive house on Bushey Park, not a mile from "St. Albans." We three—Theodore, Robert and I—have been a sort of trinity ever since I had the privilege of gaining an affectionate brother as well as a devoted husband. God knows I hold myself lucky for all the family love so generously showered on me during my long life! I am grateful beyond words that I was brought up by parents I adored, with a sister who was everything to me from my earliest years. She is only eighteen months my senior and as if that wasn't enough good fortune, I have been granted a blissful married life.

Troubles and sickness are bound to come, father and mother by the law of nature pass on to their fuller life, but mourning and tears cannot wash away the bright pattern of enchantment which love weaves for ever. Family love, so different from passion's fiery darts, stands apart in all its holiness like a kind of sacrament. It has been my spiritual food and drink at all times and in all circumstances. I noted in an article

the other day on the Sitwells that Edith Sitwell was educated privately, a privilege for which she is devoutly thankful. How genuinely I can understand that feeling! The thought of leaving my home and tearing myself from loved ones for the mere sake of education filled me with despair. If school were ever mentioned Evelyn and I would throw ourselves into a fever and implore not to be sent away as fervently as if our parents contemplated sending us to prison. I often wonder what would have happened if I had been dragged away in a torrent of tears, to be placed in even the best possible school. Love of home and dear ones made me determined that should such a catastrophe occur, nothing would stop me bolting back to "St. Albans" with the fixed resolve that wild horses could not dislodge me again. Luckily this desperate move was never necessary and we were reared without any standardisation to rob us of a certain originality which school, especially in those days, crushed if possible out of impressionable youth. With boys it is quite different.

I was struck by Osbert Sitwell's amazing powers of observation in his book: *The Scarlet Tree*. Whether he shares his sister's "intense dislike of simplicity" I do not know, but I wish I had his eye for the beauties of art and architecture.

After all, life is observation. To observe makes everything so personal, so individual, so intensely interesting.

There is an abiding beauty in the lost paths of childhood when home has been happy. Rare moments and hours stand out like landmarks creating a dreamworld in which failures and pin-pricks are forgotten.

My career as a writer has brought me intense happiness, without this outlet I feel I should have died of mental blood pressure.

After concentrating for years on novels which occupied my time so fully, it amazed me to discover the joy of writing memoirs, resurrecting the past and as it were living one's life over again. I have been deeply touched by the number of letters received from strangers, some telling me their life history and many asking for my prayers. I made it a matter of conscience to answer them all in my own handwriting, privately, because they were generally of a confidential nature. This has been no light task since *That Reminds Me*— was launched upon the world. Only a few of my unknown correspondents were considerate enough to enclose a stamped, addressed envelope for reply. This is an enormous help for a busy person. If any who write to me about my *Observations* would remember this, I should be grateful. It happened in many cases that addresses were written so illegibly, I had to verify the locality in the A.B.C. My chapter on "The Gift of Healing" alone brought Mr. Squire-Tucker quite 300 letters, and he too wished those who required answers had enclosed envelopes duly stamped and

addressed. It is just thoughtlessness, so I throw out the hint for future occasions!

It is sad how many people look upon life as dull and monotonous. I am thankful to say I have always found "the daily round" worth while and "the common task" full of adventure. If you want adventure, let your motto be: "Seek and ye shall find."

I do not believe in the Greek saying that: "Lamentations are a sure relief of sufferings." The cheerful outlook is the rainbow after storm and often comfort comes from unexpected sources.

A friend of mine who lost a dear husband and has mourned him for four years, says she loves the river so much because it seems to smooth away sorrows. I wonder if my older readers feel that as the years multiply, life hastens on with increased speed. This must be a sign that age in many ways is less trying, calmer and more equitable than youth.

My days are nearly done, but I hope to the last lap I shall look back on earthly existence as a Storehouse rich with the hidden treasures of the mind. The best jewel in that secret casket, the most beautiful gift life can offer, is the priceless one of Love. The surest way to attain it can be found in just three words: "Love thyself last."

Is there anything more sweet than to be loved? I ask no other blessedness. For many it is "The morning-star of memory" when the rainbow lustre fails and the reaper has done his work. Still the fragrance that clings to a crushed flower remains; nothing can take from us the glory of loving and being loved.

I began my *Observations* in the opening year of 1946 and have let my pen wander on over pages which to some may seem disjointed and casual. Unless I had allowed myself to write intimately, jotting things down just as the spirit moved me, I would not have attempted a second volume.

Now with August drawing to its close, a kind of September stillness creeps over me. I recall the proverb:

"September blow soft
Till the fruit's in the loft."

The fruits of these few months in which I have written of many friends and happy happenings, must pass once more into the loft of memory.

When this book will see the light remains in the hands of my good publisher.

It has been said you should choose an author as you choose a friend. May I sign myself, reader, "your friend," with the wish that you will never be "empty of friends."

Falling leaves will soon be heaping gold on our garden paths and we must crown old Winter's head with stern courage and spartan endurance. Recent months have kept us in training for cold weather, I often wonder what foreigners think of our climate!

Tennyson heralded Autumn on a sad note in his poignant lines:

"Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
 Tears from the depths of some divine despair
 Rise in the heart and gather in the eyes,
 In looking on the happy Autumn-fields,
 And thinking of the days that are no more."

Well—well—it is time I drew the curtains after taking a last peep at the night. It is very dark outside—no moon, but here within, above my desk, an electric bulb sheds its pleasant radiance on these final sheets of paper.

With Shakespeare I say: "Put out the light and then—put out the light."

I am going to bed. My task is done.

Having talked of childhood, a verse I learnt in earliest youth flashes back, ringing the bells of memory with a grave and sweetly confiding lilt.

It is a vow made to the "gentle Jesus" who loved little children.
 Why not say it now?

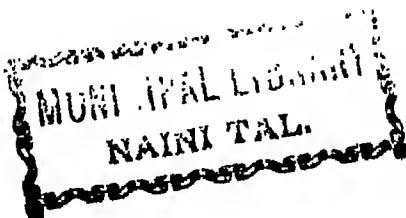
Why not say it always when I close my eyes?

In deep humility I ask myself, can He want this poor gift of mine?
 Here are the words:

"And now I lay me down to sleep
 I give my soul to Christ to keep.
 Wake I at morn—or wake I never—
 I give my soul to Christ for ever."

A M E N

THE END



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